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- *New era at PSG*
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In Pictures

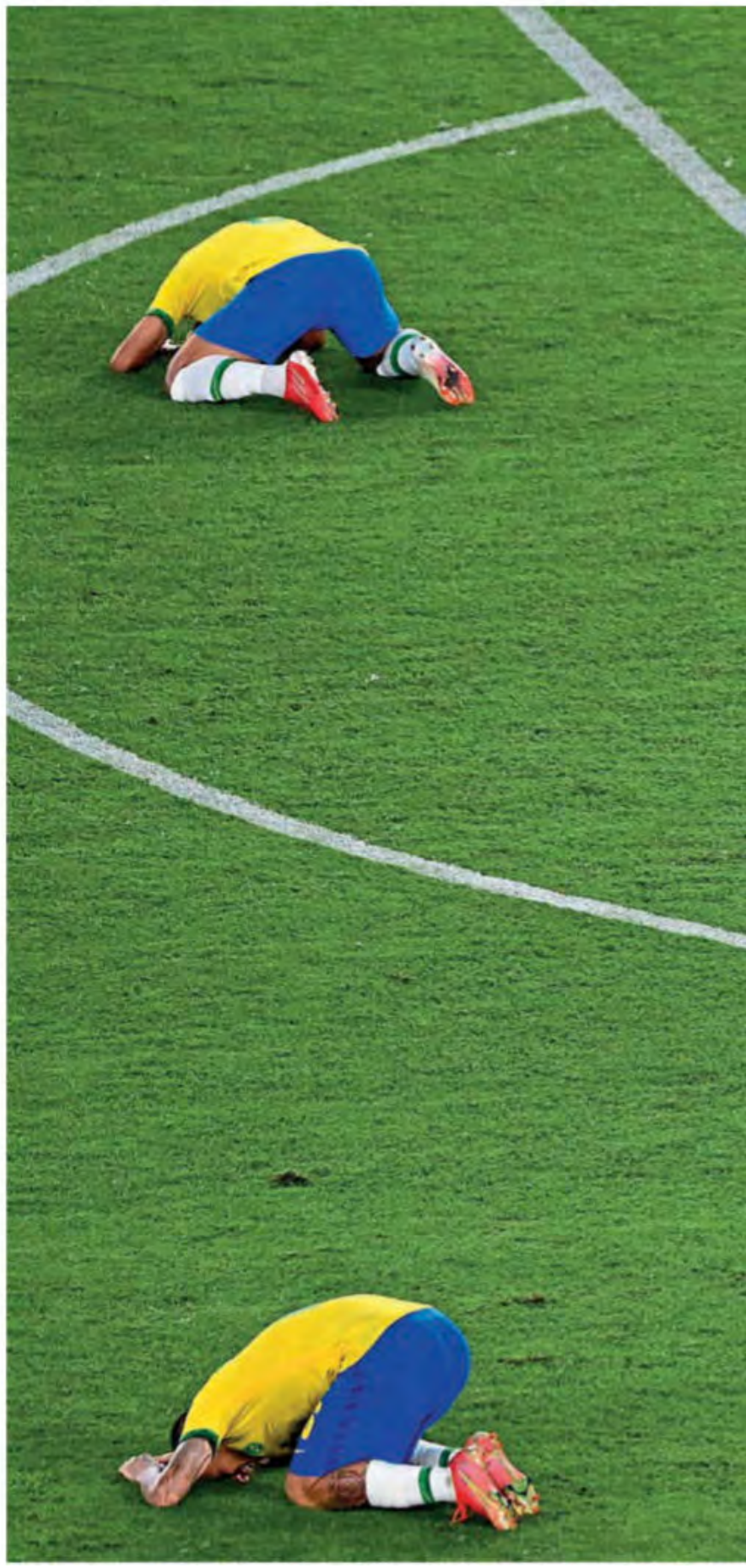
The global game caught on camera

France...Lionel Messi salutes the Paris Saint-Germain fans as he is welcomed to his new club

Germany...Robert Lewandowski clashes with former team-mate Marco Reus in the German Super Cup. The striker scored twice in a 3-1 Bayern win

Italy...Lazio coach Maurizio Sarri poses with the club's mascot, Olimpia the eagle

Argentina...Boca Juniors and Argentinos Juniors players clash on a waterlogged pitch



Japan...Ivory Coast forward Aboubacar Doumbia is sent off after grabbing Saudi Arabia's Ayman Al Khulaif

Northern Ireland...sub keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga celebrates after his decisive save wins the UEFA Super Cup for Chelsea

Japan...Brazil stars sink to their knees in elation at winning an Olympic gold medal, while Spain ace Pedri looks dejected

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FROM THE EDITOR

Two of football's greatest-ever goalscorers receive coverage in this edition of *World Soccer*. We pay our respects to the game's original goal machine, Gerd Muller (page 58), with Keir Radnedge offering a glowing tribute to "*Der Bomber*", whose many goal records still stand today.

Another player who has his own set of incredible goalscoring feats is Lionel Messi, and his shock move to Paris Saint-Germain perhaps poses more questions than answers for the French giants (page 16) whilst simultaneously leaving a gaping hole in the Spanish game. The fallout in Spain from Messi's exit, along with La Liga's proposed deal with private equity firm CVC, has led to shockwaves within the domestic scene, and Colin Millar helps us digest the latest developments (page 24).

It isn't just goalscorers, though, who achieve headlines and stardom in today's game. Another PSG signing, and Euro 2020 Player of The Tournament, Gianluigi Donnarumma looks set for a decade of dominance as the world's best goalkeeper, and Nick Bidwell tracks his journey from teenage starlet to worldwide superstar (page 46).

Steve Menary digs deep into the murkier side of the game, with clubs in Latvia (page 20) and Belarus (page 79) making more headlines off the pitch than on it, while Ben Bocsak shines the light on a more inspiring story, with Zambian club Kafue Celtic providing a pathway for an abundance of promising African talents to make their way in the game (page 28).

Two of football's greatest-ever goalscorers receive coverage in this edition of *World Soccer*

On the pitch, congratulations are in order for the United States, who added the Gold Cup to their recent Nations League victory in what appears to be a power shift from Mexico to further north of the continent in CONCACAF (page 82), while Brazil's men's team (page 80) and Canada's women's team (page 64) arrived back from Japan with coveted Olympic gold medals around their necks. We provide full reviews, along with definitive squad lists (page 86), of all three competitions.

With the 2022 World Cup now just over 12 months away, lots of countries will have similar aspirations for glory, and we provide an update on the "Road to Qatar" with the next round of qualifiers imminently underway in Europe, South America, Asia, Africa and CONCACAF (page 68).

And on the club scene, the Champions League starts again in September. As usual we provide a preview and players to watch ahead of UEFA's showcase competition (page 36), where PSG will be hoping the signing of Messi finally helps them succeed in their quest to win the crown. Only time will tell if Leo can add another glorious chapter to his already iconic career.

Stephen Fishlock, Group Editor

CAMEROON

Draw made for delayed AFCON

A month after the competition was originally scheduled to kick-off – before being moved twice, firstly due to "unfavourable climatic conditions" and then COVID-19 – the draw for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations has taken place.

CAF had changed the timing of the tournament and, in July 2019, Algeria became the first-ever summertime winners in Egypt. However, 2021 hosts Cameroon could not commit to a summer tournament due to their rainy season, thus the competition was shifted to January 2021, before the pandemic led to a further year's delay.

The most eye-catching group will see holders Algeria face Ivory Coast, while AFCON debutants Comoros have a tough task in Group C against Morocco, Ghana and Gabon.

The top two nations from each group will progress to the knockout stages, along with the four best third-placed teams. The tournament kicks off on January 9, 2022.

Draw in full:

GROUP A
Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Cape Verde
GROUP B
Senegal, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Malawi
GROUP C
Morocco, Ghana, Comoros, Gabon
GROUP D
Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan, Guinea-Bissau
GROUP E
Algeria, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast
GROUP F
Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania, Gambia

"A lifelong Liverpool supporter, Andrew continued to attend matches at Anfield when possible despite suffering life-changing injuries at Hillsborough"

Liverpool pay tribute to Andrew Devine, who recently passed away from injuries suffered at the Hillsborough disaster, making him its 97th victim

CAF president... Patrice Motsepe presents the draw from Yaounde

ENGLAND

Heading restrictions introduced

After a number of studies investigating the link between football and dementia, professional footballers are to be limited to ten "higher force headers" per week in training under new guidelines for this season.

According to a joint-statement by the FA, Premier League, EFL, PFA and LMA "higher force" describes headers which follow "a long pass (more than 35 metres) or from crosses, corners and free-kicks."

"This recommendation is provided to protect player welfare and will be reviewed regularly as further research is undertaken to understand more regarding the impact of heading in football."

Leading figures in the sport have come under increasing pressure to do more to address the alarming and disproportionate number of former professional players who go on to suffer from dementia. Just weeks after the guidelines were issued, former Manchester United and Scotland legend Denis Law became the latest former player to be diagnosed with the disease.

Diagnosed... Denis Law

HEROES & VILLAINS

Bender twins...the former Bayer Leverkusen pair retired at the end of last season

BENDER TWINS

After retiring from top-flight football in the summer, Lars and Sven Bender have returned to the club where they made their names: ninth-tier side TSV Brannenburg. "We still have three or four players in the squad who played with Lars and Sven," says head coach Hans Nietzold. "They kept in touch and always said: 'If we stop, we'll play again for Brannenburg.'"

DANI ALVES

The Brazil captain has cemented his status as the most decorated footballer of all time, adding an Olympic gold medal to take his haul to 43 trophies. The 38-year-old full-back played every minute of his team's campaign, and was one of the outstanding performers. "He is an example to all Brazilian footballers," said Brazil's Olympics coach Andre Jardine.

CARLI LLOYD

The USA legend also starred at the Olympics, before announcing that she would be calling time on her stellar career at the end of the season. The 39-year-old scored twice in her final competitive game for her country, to add a bronze medal to her collection of trophies, which also includes two gold medals, two World Cups and two FIFA World/Best Player of the Year awards, plus 312 USA caps.

CHRISTIAN ERIKSEN

At the start of August, the midfielder returned to the Internazionale training ground for the first time since his cardiac arrest at Euro 2020. "Eriksen is doing well and is in excellent physical and mental shape," said a statement on the club's website, although his future is still in doubt; Serie A rules prevent him from playing with the ICD device that he currently has fitted.

JUVENTUS WOMEN

The Italian club came under fire for a tweet that was described as "blatant racism". The post was deleted just 25 minutes after being posted, with the club later releasing a statement: "We would like to express our deepest apologies... Juventus immediately realised that the club had committed an unforgivable mistake, and this mistake has seriously hurt the feelings of all people who oppose racial discrimination."

COLOMBIAN FANS

The return of fans to stadiums in the Colombian capital of Bogota was marred by violence in the stands. Independiente Santa Fe v Atletico Nacional, the first match with a crowd in 513 days, was supposed to signal the return of fans, but stadiums will continue to be empty after violence in the stands spilled onto the pitch leading to seven people being hospitalised.

TALKSPORT

The UK radio station was forced to apologise after broadcasting an anti-Semitic comment from a caller directed at Tottenham Hotspur chairman Daniel Levy. Lee Clayton, head of the station, said: "We are all appalled by the comment that was made by a caller during a live YouTube broadcast of The Sports Bar. We are deeply sorry to Tottenham and, especially, to chairman Daniel Levy."

SPARTA PRAGUE FANS

Monaco midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni was subjected to alleged racist chanting during a Champions League qualifier in the Czech capital. The game was paused while a message was played on the public address system warning that further abuse would lead to postponement. "I won't let hate win this game," said the 21-year-old afterwards.

Abused...Tchouameni in action against Sparta Prague

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Optimistic Old Trafford puts pressure on Ole

The most significant Premier League transfer deals in the past couple of years have been the purchase of world-class defenders. Liverpool's thrilling rise to become European and English champions was founded on the rock of Virgil van Dijk's arrival at centre-back. Ruben Dias was voted Player of the Year last season for his transformation of Manchester City's previously fragile defence.

Nobody doubts the truth of this, and certainly nobody can doubt that Manchester United will significantly improve their team with the purchase of France centre-back Raphael Varane for around £42 million from Real Madrid. It is a stunning deal, whichever way you look at it.

Varane's pedigree is absolutely exceptional – a World Cup winner and four Champions League trophies to his name. The financial numbers are equally impressive for United; the highly-regarded independent assessors at *Transfermarkt* reckon Varane's actual market value is around the £63m-mark. After years of paying too much for too little, this is an outstanding transfer coup.

The mood of optimism at Old Trafford has been further boosted by another excellent signing in young England ace Jason Sancho, whose rare talent has been underappreciated by football followers in his home country, and probably also by national team boss Gareth Southgate.

Exciting...Sancho will be expected to light up Old Trafford

United's naturally ebullient manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is full of hope, claiming that his team can now be credible challengers for the Premier League title. Varane, in particular, is seen as the crucial final piece in the jigsaw.

Solskjaer absolutely needs that assessment to be correct. If he doesn't capture at least one trophy in this new season, the Norwegian will be shown to the exit door. He knows that well enough, saying: "It doesn't matter if you have a ten-year contract; if you don't do well, you go. You feel under pressure all the time. It's not just about clinging onto your job, it's about the responsibility in my hands. We've got millions of fans."

> If [Ole Gunnar Solskjaer] doesn't capture at least one trophy in this new season, the Norwegian will be shown to the exit door

The intelligence, speed, perception and experience of Varane in defence alongside Harry Maguire will help Manchester United. But is this truly the game-changing deal, or is it merely another where the club are playing catch-up on their rivals, who have already cured their defensive problems?

It seems surprising to me that United have put so much faith in Edinson Cavani as their main striker when the summer transfer rumble has centred on the destinations of Harry Kane and Romelu Lukaku; two of the most prolific strikers in Europe, and two players at the height of their careers.

Defenders are integral to a champion football team, but goalscorers are the most essential ingredient – and market value reflects this. Kane is rated at £110m and Lukaku at £92m by *Transfermarkt*, while Erling Haaland is at £120m. The number for Cavani is £6m.

The low value factors in his age; Cavani is now 34. It is also influenced by his numbers last season. In all competitions he scored 17 goals in 39 matches. Not bad, but far from compelling either. It was the first season in a decade since his early days at Palermo that the rangy Uruguayan had scored at less than a goal every two games.

The very best football teams do not rely on veteran strikers. Juventus went one season too long leaning on the shoulders of Cristiano Ronaldo and lost their Serie A title to the goals scored by Lukaku for Internazionale.

What about Robert Lewandowski you might say? Sure, he has just turned 33, but the Poland superstar is 18 months younger than Cavani, and has a resilient market value of £55m. His record for Bayern Munich last year was beyond phenomenal, breaking the all-time Bundesliga record for goals scored in a season set by Gerd Muller 49 years ago.

The numbers of Lewandowski merely emphasise the reality that goalscorers are the diamonds.

So, while it is undoubtedly true that acquiring Varane for a relatively modest transfer fee represents a brilliant coup in the transfer market for Manchester United, the view here is that this will not be the defining deal of the summer of 2021 when the dust settles and all the money is banked.

"Chelsea Football Club is shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Emilio Ballack at the terribly young age of 18. All our thoughts are with his father Michael and his family at this sad time"

Chelsea pay their respects to Emilio Ballack, the son of former Blues and Germany midfielder Michael Ballack

OBITUARIES

Leeds legend... Cooper played 351 games in 12 years at Elland Road

Terry COOPER
(1944-2021)

Terry Cooper dazzled at the 1970 World Cup as an innovative rampaging left-back, and was an integral cog in the mighty Leeds United team of that era. He was forever an unassuming hero until his death this summer at the age of 77.

When he reflected, last year, on the famous England v Brazil showdown in that 1970 tournament, Cooper's indelible memory was of the moments before kick-off. He recalled: "The bell went to walk out from the dressing rooms and I marched into the corridor, never too fussed where I stood. As it happened, I was opposite Pele. He turned and said to me in broken English, 'All the best Cooper.'

"I thought I had a decent build but I looked at him and he was twice the size of me! They were proper athletes and tough boys. Then it dawned on me that Pele knew who I was, and I thought I must have done something in football if he recognised me. I never forgot that."

Pele knew, and Brazil knew, that Cooper was the best left-back in the world at that time, a defender who could tackle fiercely, but was also equipped with the speed, skill and panache to attack like a winger. Cooper's fast-raiding style is how all the best full-backs play today, from Trent Alexander-Arnold to Leonardo Spinazzola. It was rare back in 1970; Cooper was in the vanguard of a football revolution.

His talent was perfectly suited to the dominant Leeds side of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and brought Cooper a cascade of medals amid a tightly-knit team created by manager Don Revie. The first was a League Cup triumph in 1968 when Cooper scored the winning goal at Wembley with a left-foot volley.

They won the European Fairs Cup the same season and a year later the league title. In 1971 there was another victory in the Fairs Cup final, this time against a Juventus team featuring Fabio Capello, Helmut Haller and Roberto Bettega. Cooper was Man of the Match in the initial away leg, a 2-2 draw in Turin, when his attacking forays created goals and tormented Juventus into caution. It was the pinnacle of his career.

He was just 26, in his prime, only to suffer a broken leg in a league match against Stoke City in 1972. The injury effectively ended his elite status, and meant he won just 20 caps for England. His defiant character meant he never gave up hope of playing again, though, and he enjoyed three years at Middlesbrough followed by lower-league seasons with Bristol City, Bristol Rovers and Doncaster.

Cooper's best work as a manager was at Bristol City, where he was integral in reviving the club after three successive relegations, winning promotion and taking them to victory in the Freight Rover Trophy final. Fighting back tears as he clutched the trophy, he said: "I played for England but this is the best day of my life." The Robins recently moved into a new training ground, and fans have called for it to be named in his honour.

His final role in football was 12 years working as Southampton's European scout. His eye for a good prospect was razor-sharp, and Cooper recalled advising the club there was a young striker at French club Guingamp who could be bought for a nominal fee. Southampton demurred, and rather regretted neglecting the chance to sign Didier Drogba.

He retired to Tenerife, but his heart never left Leeds and the mighty team of which he was one of the legends. So many have passed away in recent months – Norman Hunter, Jackie Charlton, Trevor Cherry, Peter Lorimer and Mick Bates. And now, also, the modest maestro who was once the best left-back in the world.

Jim Holden

Gerd MULLER
(1945-2021)

Bayern Munich and Germany legend. *(Appreciation, page 58)*

Tommy LEISHMAN
(1937-2021)

Wing-half and a key player for the Liverpool team that got promoted to the top flight under Bill Shankly in 1962.

Italo VASSALLO
(1940-2021)

Match-winner in the 1962 AFCON final, scoring in extra-time for Ethiopia v Egypt.

Ally DAWSON
(1958-2021)

Defender who spent 12 years at Rangers and won five Scotland caps.

Milan ZIVADINOVIC
(1944-2021)

Serbian whose coaching CV included Yugoslavia, Iraq, Ghana and Myanmar.

Robbie COOKE
(1957-2021)

Forward and England C international whose clubs included Peterborough United, Brentford and Cambridge United.

Porfirio Armando BETANCOURT
(1957-2021)

Striker who scored five goals in nine international matches for Honduras.

Antonio DE LA TORRE
(1951-2021)

Part of Mexico's 1978 World Cup squad and won 44 caps in defence for *El Tri*.

Mike SMITH
(1937-2021)

The first non-Welshman to manage Wales, and also coached Hull City before guiding Egypt to AFCON glory in 1986.

Wales manager...Mike Smith in December 1994

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

FIFA wants Super Leagues – starting in Africa

Did you really think the Super League project was dead and buried? Think again. It's bouncing back. Not in Europe but, instead, on a roundabout route via Africa. This version also boasts the full-hearted, public support of FIFA and its president, Gianni Infantino.

Infantino knows all about the gold-encrusted value of high-profile international club competition. He was, for seven years, general secretary of UEFA. That provided him with eye-popping evidence of the multi-million bids by broadcasters and sponsors for a slice of Champions League action.

No surprise then that Infantino, on lifting the reins of power five years ago, was baffled by the club chasm in FIFA's schedule of 15 international competitions. An unspoken deal had left club games to the confederations while FIFA focused on national teams. FIFA's only incursion was the deeply unattractive, unthreatening Club World Cup.

But that was yesterday. For tomorrow, Infantino has his acquisitive eyes on new club riches. Florentino Perez recognised this. But the COVID-19-engendered cash crisis provoked his Real Madrid, plus Juventus and Barcelona, to jump the gun. Their crucial blunder was to launch their Super League without having FIFA formally on board. That left them up the UEFA creek without a financial paddle.

Infantino's initial project had been expansion of the Club World Cup into a 24-team close-season tournament every two years. This was to have been launched this past summer in China. But problems finding a cash backer and then the pandemic kicked it into the long grass. Higher up Infantino's project now is the contentious idea of a World Cup every two years.

Not that FIFA has discarded its club game ambitions. Proof is the dream of a worldwide Super League, with Africa as the declared test bed.

Infantino put Super Leagues squarely on the agenda when he addressed FIFA Congress earlier this year. He told delegates from all 211 national associations: "We always have to think about the fans and all the countries in the world and about the players. We want to have 50 top national teams and 50 top clubs worldwide. Women and men alike.

"The core principles of solidarity and equal opportunity are the pillars on which our sport is built. The existing model is not perfect. There is a concentration of money and player talent [in Europe], which does not serve the game's global interests. We cannot ignore that. Is football really global? The answer is no...out of the top 30 clubs in terms of revenues there is not one club outside Europe."

African super club... Al Ahly of Egypt would be central to an African Super League

> "We have to take the 20 best clubs in Africa and have them play in an African league...I want to lift African football to the top of the world"
>
> FIFA president Gianni Infantino, speaking in 2019

The answer? Super Leagues of course. Starting not with Europe – that would be political dynamite now – but Africa. Why? Simple. This is the one continent over which FIFA wields almost absolute control.

Two years ago, FIFA – at the engineered request of favour-seeking CAF directors – sent in secretary-general Fatma Samoura to sort out its administration and opaque media rights. This past spring Samoura's house-cleaning was duly followed by the election of Infantino's choice as new CAF president. Patrice Motsepe is one of Africa's richest businessmen and the first CAF president from southern Africa. No secret about where his loyalties lie.

Motsepe has proved the point. He has revealed himself an enthusiastic supporter for the concept of a World Cup every two years (like Arsene Wenger, now in FIFA's employ as development director) and for a continental Super League.

FIFA Congress, to Infantino's satisfaction, voted for a feasibility study for a biennial World Cup. Motsepe was a cheerleader of this "excellent resolution." As he said: "Taking into

account our serious financial challenges, lack of infrastructure and facilities, African football could probably be the biggest beneficiary of a World Cup every two years."

A few more weeks and (surprise, surprise!) the prospect of a FIFA-approved African Super League hove into view.

Infantino had planted the seed during an African tour in November 2019. He had told a media briefing in DR Congo: "We have to take the 20 best clubs in Africa and have them play in an African league. Such a league can generate at least €200m in revenue, which would put it in the top ten in the world overnight.

"We aim [for this] to raise €1 billion so that we can provide each African country with a real football stadium to FIFA and international standards. We will take the best African referees, we will pay them. We will professionalise refereeing in Africa. I want to lift African football to the top of the world."

As to whether a Super League would replace the African Champions League and Confederation Cup, he did not say. Enough to put the idea out there and whet his listeners' appetite for new money.

Motsepe was delighted with what he heard and set discussions in train. He also essayed a neat shaft at the patronising attitude of some European FAs by saying: "We have followed the attempt of certain big European clubs to set up such a competition and will try to learn from their failure."

Africa has plenty of major clubs, from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia in the north down to South Africa itself, where Mamelodi Sundowns are owned by none other than Motsepe himself.

No one will oppose an African Super League, though nailing the details will be complex. Presumably the launch date will depend on a projection of Africa's emergence from the pandemic, whenever that may be. Then, should it involve 20 clubs, 24 or even 50? Should the format mix knockout and mini-leagues?

Most important: how will the clubs be selected? Every region will expect to be represented. After all, Infantino will not expect Motsepe to sow any seeds of voter unrest in his new kingdom.

Progress will be watched intently in South America: CONMEBOL never needs any encouragement to create new club competitions; same again for CONCACAF in North and Central America. However that is as far as it goes for now. Oceania, missing Australia, lacks the numbers and cash for such a competition. As for pandemic-battered Asia, the AFC has enough problems right now in trying to stage its existing events.

UEFA will keep a wary eye on this new direction of Super League attack. Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus have merely put their own project on hold, having conceded the political and diplomatic blunders of their premature breakaway advance. After all, Infantino was never going to approve any event created outside what predecessor Sepp Blatter always called, protectively, the "FIFA family."

FIFA's lawyers are jealously alert to shoot down threats to its monopolistic authority. Their latest court victory has been celebrated in the United States courts.

A case was brought by the agency Relevent, which organises the annual International Champions Cup. Relevent wanted to go one step further. This would have involved staging in the US one of Barcelona's Spanish league matches – similar to the scheme once considered by the Premier League as "the 39th match."

The Spanish federation said No. La Liga said No. The US Soccer Federation said No. Finally, FIFA said No. So Relevent looked to US anti-trust legislation to challenge FIFA's monopolistic powers – in vain. Manhattan District Judge Valerie Caproni said Relevent had failed to show that FIFA's refusal of permission demonstrated an illegal conspiracy.

Relevent will be keeping a close watch on a separate challenge to the dominant power of international federations at the European Court of Justice. The Madrid Commercial Court wants to know whether UEFA's disciplinary action against the European Super League clubs breaches European Union competition law.

Is this important? Yes. Potentially this would be even more important than the revolutionary Bosman Verdict in 1995, which blew away foreign player restrictions and created stratospheric inflation in transfer fees and wages.

The Madrid court, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus had hoped to jump the European Court queue for a quick ruling. No such luck. The delay was presented as a victory for UEFA. Nothing of the sort. The Spanish judge and the three clubs must wait. But so must UEFA – and FIFA. Perhaps not until next year will they discover whether they really do possess the powers they have always claimed.

Patrice Motsepe...the CAF president also owns South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns

BOOKS THIS MONTH

THE AWAY LEG
Steve Menary and James Montague (Pitch Publishing, £12.99)

From derbies in Brazil, Georgia and Israel to the momentous rise of the Iceland men's national team, from Palestine and North Korea to a UEFA Cup final overshadowed by murder, the story of South America's most remarkable Copa Libertadores final and an historic triumph by Arsenal in the UEFA Women's Cup final, *The Away Leg: XI Football Stories From On The Road* takes your imagination on a trip around the world with remarkable tales from across the globe.

PROGRAMMES! PROGRAMMES!
By Cliff Hague (Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

A "must" for lovers of football nostalgia, with fascinating, funny and quirky tales galore, this is an archaeological dig through a collection of 2,000 programmes: from the bleak wartime era when players had to shelter from air raids, through to the glitz of today's global stars and fan-owned clubs. The stories play out against a backdrop of economic, technological and social change, rekindling the memories of generations of fans.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Messi does not solve any of PSG's problems

Players are not islands, entire of themselves. They exist as part of structures, in systems. They need players around them. A player may have extraordinary natural ability, but he will be able to exploit it fully only with the right players around him – and, of course, he also has a responsibility to others in his team, to fulfil his duties so that they too may get the best out of their abilities.

Before this summer, 20 players had moved for fees of €80 million or more. Of those, only four can be considered clear successes: Cristiano Ronaldo's transfer from Manchester United to Real Madrid, Luis Suarez's switch from Liverpool to Barcelona, Romelu Lukaku's move to Inter from Manchester United, and Virgil van Dijk joining Liverpool from Southampton. Some have been obvious failures – Barcelona's signings of Philippe Coutinho and Ousmane Dembele, Kepa Arrizabalaga's move to Chelsea. Many have not got going but may still come good – Joao Felix to Atletico Madrid, Eden Hazard to Real Madrid, Lucas Hernandez to Bayern Munich, Antoine Griezmann to Barca. Others are contested: Gareth Bale may have won four Champions Leagues with Real Madrid, but never seems to have been either happy nor central to their plans; Cristiano Ronaldo has scored 81 league goals in his first three seasons for Juventus, but at vast expense and without taking them any nearer to winning the Champions League; Manchester United are still waiting for Harry Maguire and Paul Pogba to deliver trophies.

And then there are the big two at the top of the list: Neymar and Kylian Mbappe. Which is where Lionel Messi comes in. Neymar and Mbappe cost PSG a combined €402m and have brought three league titles, three Coupes de France and two league cups. But they have not won the Champions League. Given the financial advantages PSG enjoy over their competitors in France, that really is the only competition that should mean anything. Losing the league title to Lille was a major humiliation. Does that represent a successful investment?

Welcome...Messi being presented with the No.30 shirt at the Parc des Princes

Messi brings attention and goals. But goals were never the problem for PSG

In traditional terms probably not, but what signing Neymar and Mbappe did for PSG was to inflate the market. They dug the trap by activating Neymar's release clause and Barcelona gleefully leapt in; just as they had after losing Luis Figo to Real Madrid in 2000, they felt the sting of rejection and, on the rebound, made two huge signings, neither of whom fitted the system. The ultimate consequence of that, allied to gross mismanagement, is that PSG are able to pick up Messi from Barca for free.

A forward line of Messi, Neymar and Mbappe is absolutely terrifying. They will, surely, score hatfuls of goals in Ligue 1. There will be moments of brilliance, whether individual or from the three in combination. How meaningful that is against such limited opponents (Messi's basic annual salary is only a fraction less than that of Lille's for their entire squad) is questionable, but RC Paris' record of 118 goals

All-star cast...PSG's summer signings (left-right): Achraf Hakimi, Gini Wijnaldum, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Sergio Ramos and Messi

for a Ligue 1 season, set in 1959-60, could be under threat.

But that really should be almost a given. The real test of PSG will come in the spring, in the Champions League. And there, it really isn't clear how much of a benefit Messi will be. PSG may be better equipped to win the Champions League this season than last, perhaps than ever before, but if they are it is because of the other signings they have made, not because of Messi.

Full-back was an area of major concern; Achraf Hakimi will clearly be an improvement there. Sergio Ramos will add steel and a winning mentality, while Gianluigi Donnarumma and Gini Wijnaldum increase the options in goal and central midfield. All of them answer a clear need in the squad, and in Donnarumma's case perhaps giving PSG a high-class keeper for a decade or more.

Messi brings attention and goals. But goals were never the problem for PSG. A far bigger issue was the way the existing forward line left its midfield exposed. Against most sides, weight of talent will out, but PSG were comfortably beaten by Manchester City in the Champions League semi-final last season, just as the previous season they had been beaten far more comfortably by Bayern in the Champions League final than the 1-0 scoreline suggested.

Adding all the talent in the world won't change that unless players are willing and able to press. Messi used to do that, but even in Pep Guardiola's final season at Barca he was struggling. Barca's recent Champions League history is a story of heavy defeats: 4-0 to PSG and 3-0 to Juventus in 2017, 3-0 to Roma in 2018, 4-0 to Liverpool in 2019, 8-2 to Bayern in 2020, and 4-1 to PSG in 2021. In part that is because of a slow midfield, but it's because that deficiency was exposed by a dysfunctional system that began with the forward line.

Lionel Messi may be the greatest player there has ever been, but that doesn't make him the answer to PSG's biggest problem.

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Wrexham...the source of the sign is a mystery

1 FC HOLLYWOOD

AFC Wrexham of the National League were taken over by film stars Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney earlier this year, with the actors hoping to transform the club on and off the pitch. One change that has been made is the arrival of a Hollywood-style Wrexham sign at a colliery tip overlooking the North Wales town. Who is behind the sign however, is a mystery; the club have denied being involved, with the culprit choosing to remain anonymous.

2 SHEER TALENT

Wrexham aren't the only club with celebrity backers. Pop star Ed Sheeran proved his Ipswich Town-supporting credentials by sponsoring the League One club's shirts for this season, and the club have decided to thank him by granting him a shirt number and place in the squad. Presumably Sheeran won't actually be called upon in the Tractor Boys' promotion chase, although he wouldn't be the first musician to play for his boyhood club – One Direction star Louis Tomlinson has appeared for Doncaster Rovers' reserve side.

3 LISBON RIVALRY HEATS UP

When Sporting sold Joao Mario to Inter in 2016, they inserted a "rivals" clause, stating that they would be due an extra €30m if the midfielder was later sold to a Portuguese club. To avoid this, it has been reported that Mario bought out his own contract for €7m, which was then reimbursed by Benfica. To add to the controversy, Mario even turned down a return to Sporting after winning last season's title while there on loan, choosing to join their biggest rivals instead. The Portuguese champions are ready to fight for the money they believe they're owed.

4 CHILEAN SENSATION

If you weren't aware that Blackburn Rovers striker Ben Brereton "Diaz" had switched his international allegiance to Chile, you could be forgiven for being confused by him starring in a Pepsi advert in the South American country. "Why not break the established?" asks the former England Under-20 man in the soft drink ad, before announcing to one of the Queen's Guard that he is going to Chile, patting him on the shoulder as he leaves.

5 #BATSMAN RISES

Football clubs are always trying to find weird and wonderful ways to announce new signings, and Turkish champions Besiktas led the way this summer. After capturing Chelsea and Belgium striker Michy Batshuayi on loan, they filmed their own interpretation of *The Dark Knight,* with Batshuayi donning a Batman costume saying: "I score without trying...I'm the goddamn BAT-SHUAYI!"

6 TWO-STAR QUARREL

In what can only be described as a gloriously petulant dispute, FIFA have fallen out with the Uruguayan FA over how many stars they can include on their kit. Currently, the South American side have four, marking the two Olympic gold medals they won in the 1920s, plus a pair of World Cups. Kit-makers Puma said that they'd been asked to remove the two Olympic stars, but AUF vice-president Gaston Tealdi responded: "FIFA has always recognised that Uruguay has four World Cups, because in 1924 and 1928 it [the Olympic football tournament] was organised by FIFA." The issue will need to be resolved by next year's World Cup in Qatar.

Two stars or four?...Uruguay's current crest

"Wow! That's made my day. That's made my year actually"

Jack Grealish discovers that he will be taking Sergio Aguero's No.10 shirt at Manchester City

IN PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

SUMMER 2021 MAJOR TRANSFERS & LOANS

Returning... Odegaard

Surprise move... Danny Ings

Euros star... Denzel Dumfries

Swapped... Erik Lamela

Loan signing... Manuel Locatelli

£100m **Jack Grealish**
Aston Villa to Man. City

£97.5m **Romelu Lukaku**
Internazionale to Chelsea

£42.7m **Raphael Varane**
Real Madrid to Man. United

£34m **Tammy Abraham**
Chelsea to Roma

£30m **Martin Odegaard**
Real Madrid to Arsenal

£30m **Leon Bailey**
B. Leverkusen to Aston Villa

£25.6m **Donyell Malen**
PSV to Borussia Dortmund

£25m **Danny Ings**
Southampton to Aston Villa

£24m **Aaron Ramsdale**
Sheffield United to Arsenal

£22m **Joe Willock**
Arsenal to Newcastle United

£21.6m +Swap **Bryan Gil**
Sevilla to Tottenham

Swap **Erik Lamela**
Tottenham to Sevilla

£21.3m **Arnaut Danjuma**
Bournemouth to Villarreal

£17.1m **Jhon Cordoba**
Hertha Berlin to Krasnodar

£15m **Eldor Shomurodov**
Genoa to Roma

£15m **Adam Armstrong**
Blackburn to Southampton

£15m **Jannik Vestergaard**
Southampton to Leicester City

£14.9m **Joachim Andersen**
Lyon to Crystal Palace

£14.5m **Myron Boadu**
AZ to Monaco

£13m **Toby Alderweireld**
Tottenham to Al Duhail

£12m **Harry Wilson**
Liverpool to Fulham

£11.9m **Baptiste Santamaria**
Freiburg to Rennes

£11m **Matias Vina**
Palmeiras to Roma

£10.6m **Denzel Dumfries**
PSV to Internazionale

£10.3m **Jean Lucas**
Lyon to Monaco

£10m **Christos Tzolis**
PAOK to Norwich City

£9.4m **Gonzalo Montiel**
River Plate to Sevilla

£8.5m **Yoane Wissa**
Lorient to Brentford

£8.5m **Luiz Araujo**
Lille to Atlanta United

£8m **Josh Sargent**
Werder Bremen to Norwich City

£6.8m **Matteo Lovato**
Verona to Atalanta

£6.8m **Marco Richter**
Augsburg to Hertha Berlin

£6.8m **Piero Hincapie**
Talleres to B. Leverkusen

£6.4m **Ivan Ilic**
Man. City to Verona

£6m **Amadou Onana**
Hamburg to Lille

£6m **Soualiho Meite**
Torino to Benfica

£5.7m **Stanley Nsoki**
Nice to Club Brugge

£5.1m **Pablo Rosario**
PSV to Nice

£5.1m **Ruan**
Gremio to Sassuolo

£4.7m **Mario Lemina**
Southampton to Nice

£4.7m **Kevin Danso**
Augsburg to Lens

£4.7m **Ludwig Augustinsson**
Werder Bremen to Sevilla

£4.3m **Luis Maximiano**
Sporting to Granada

£4.3m **Maximilian Eggestein**
Werder Bremen to Freiburg

£4.3m **Henry Onyekuru**
Monaco to Olympiakos

£4.3m **Metinho**
Fluminense to Troyes

£3.4m **Marko Arnautovic**
Shanghai Port to Bologna

£3.4m **Tin Jedvaj**
Leverkusen to Lokomotiv Moscow

£3.4m **Luca Netz**
Hertha Berlin to B. M'gladbach

£3.4m **Gianluca Busio**
Sporting Kansas City to Venezia

£2.6m **Rachid Ghezzal**
Leicester City to Besiktas

£2.6m **Kaio Jorge**
Santos to Juventus

£2m **Juraj Kucka**
Parma to Watford

£1.5m **Kristoffer Klaesson**
Valerenga to Leeds United

£1m **Joe Hart**
Tottenham to Celtic

LOANS

Manuel Locatelli
Sassuolo to Juventus
Alphonse Areola
PSG to West Ham United
Michy Batshuayi
Chelsea to Besiktas
Felix Correia
Juventus to Parma
Ben Davies
Liverpool to Sheffield United
Emerson
Chelsea to Lyon
Merih Demiral
Juventus to Atalanta
Conor Gallagher
Chelsea to Crystal Palace
Jens Petter Hauge
Milan to Eintracht Frankfurt
Matheus Henrique
Gremio to Sassuolo
Kenedy
Chelsea to Flamengo
Viktor Kovalenko
Atalanta to Spezia
Takefusa Kubo
Real Madrid to Mallorca
Troy Parrott
Tottenham to MK Dons
Bailey Peacock-Farrell
Burnley to Sheffield Wednesday
Facundo Pellistri
Manchester United to Alaves
Marko Pjaca
Juventus to Torino
Cristian Romero
Atalanta to Tottenham
Ruan
Sassuolo to Gremio
Axel Tuanzebe
Man. United to Aston Villa
Joshua Zirkzee
Bayern Munich to Anderlecht
Ozan Tufan
Fenerbahce to Watford
Alvaro Fernandez
Huesca to Brentford

FREE TRANSFERS

Lionel Messi
Barcelona to PSG
Edin Dzeko
Roma to Internazionale
Pedro
Roma to Lazio
Aleix Vidal
Sevilla to Espanyol
Vincent Koziello
Cologne to Oostende
Radja Nainggolan
Internazionale to Antwerp
Stevan Jovetic
Monaco to Hertha Berlin
Paulo Gazzaniga
Tottenham to Fulham
James McCarthy
Crystal Palace to Celtic
Cristian Zapata
Genoa to San Lorenzo
Yasser Larouci
Liverpool to Troyes
Patrick van Aanholt
Crystal Palace to Galatasaray
Marcus Bettinelli
Fulham to Chelsea
Gary Cahill
Crystal Palace to Bournemouth
Tim Sparv
AEL to HJK Helsinki

"I'm not going to be polite here, but it gives me a hard-on"

Brest coach Michel Der Zakarian when asked how he feels about Lionel Messi's arrival in Ligue 1

Appointments, sackings and loans

EUROPE

Third time lucky...Louis van Gaal

For the third time in his career, **LOUIS VAN GAAL** was named coach of the Netherlands national team following Frank de Boer's departure after Euro 2020. His previous spells in charge of *Oranje* were 2000-02 and 2012-14.

Arsenal signed 18-year-old striker **MIKA BIERETH** from Fulham after the striker turned down a contract with the Championship club. In Italy, Juventus signed Norwegian teenager **ELIAS SOLBERG** from Ullensaker.

Manchester United Women appointed form Orlando Pride boss **MARC SKINNER** to replace Casey Stoney as Red Devils manager.

Defender **FLORIAN LEJEUNE** completed a move from Newcastle United to Alaves for an undisclosed fee following a loan at the La Liga club.

LEE CARSLEY was confirmed as Aidy Boothroyd's replacement as England Under-21s coach, with Ashley Cole joining as his assistant.

Promoted... Carsley served as Boothroyd's assistant

Talented Japan playmaker **KAORU MITOMA** joined Brighton & Hove Albion from J1 League leaders Kawasaki Frontale, before being loaned out to Union Saint-Gilloise in Belgium.

SOUTH AMERICA

DIEGO COSTA returned to the county of his birth, joining Brazil's Atletico Mineiro after being released by Atletico Madrid at the end of 2020.

Returning... Diego Costa waves to Atletico Mineiro fans

Boca Juniors snapped up Peru international **LUIS ADVINCULA** from Rayo Vallecano for £1.7m.

CONCACAF

LA Galaxy confirmed the signing of Serbia striker **DEJAN JOVELJIC** from Eintracht Frankfurt.

ASIA

DICK ADVOCAAT came out of retirement just months after leaving Feyenoord to take charge of Iraq.

J1 League side Vissel Kobe signed striker **YOSHINORI MUTO** from Newcastle United on a free transfer, as well as former Barcelona and Stoke City forward **BOJAN KRKIC**.

EZGJAN ALIOSKI joined Saudi club Al Ahli after his departure from Leeds United, while West Bromwich Albion lost **MATHEUS PEREIRA** to Al Hilal. UAE outfit Sharjah FC completed the signing of Everton winger **BERNARD**.

Reigning champions Mumbai City paid an Indian Super League record fee for NorthEast United midfielder **LALENGMAWIA "APUIA" RALTE**.

OUT

EUROPE

Chelsea sold four of their academy graduates to Premier League rivals for undisclosed fees: **DYNEL SIMEU** joined Southampton, **CHARLIE WIGGETT** went to Newcastle, **MYLES PEART-HARRIS** signed for Brentford, and Leeds United saw off competition from several clubs to land midfielder **LEWIS BATE**, while **TINO LIVRAMENTO** joined Simeu at Southampton for a fee of £5m.

Ukraine's **ANDRIY SHEVCHENKO** announced his departure as national team coach after five years in the role.

Ukraine legend... Shevchenko

JOHN TERRY quit his role as Dean Smith's assistant at Aston Villa to pursue a managerial role for himself.

Former England winger **STEWART DOWNING** announced his retirement from the game at the age of 37.

Retiring... Downing last played for Blackburn Rovers

Crystal Palace released 34-year-old centre-back **SCOTT DANN** after seven years at Selhurst Park.

Ventspils

Latvian club faces uncertain future after being handed seven-year European ban for match-fixing by UEFA

The downfall of Ventspils and their controversial owner Adlan Shishkhanov had been a long time coming.

This summer, UEFA banned the six-time Latvian champions from European club competition for seven years due to the club's involvement in a 1-0 defeat in a Europa League qualifier in July 2018 to Ligue 1 side Bordeaux, who were not implicated. UEFA also handed down a ten-year ban on Sergey Lapochkin, a Russian referee who had been on FIFA's international list since 2013, and banned Ventspils' sports manager Nikolajs Djakins from football for four years.

Ventspils cannot return to European football until 2027-28 but that seems a long way off. After being banned, the club pulled out of this season's Latvian top flight – Virsliga – and their results were expunged, but Shishkhanov is unlikely to ever return.

UEFA has asked FIFA to extend its lifetime ban worldwide, which would end the controversial Chechen's torrid journey through European football.

Shishkhanov first emerged in 2007 when he tried to buy a 49 per cent stake of German football club Carl Zeiss Jena with partner Murat Luyanov, in return for a €25m investment made over five years through a Caribbean-based company.

That failed and a year later he surfaced in Moldova to take control of Dacia Chisinau. Under his ownership, the club won the title in 2011, but Shishkhanov subsequently left to take control of rivals, Zimbru, before returning to Dacia just over a season later.

During this time, a swathe of friendly matches played by Moldovan clubs, many in Turkey, began attracting alerts due to suspicious betting movements from betting operators, many of whom stopped offering the matches as a result.

Shishkhanov later stood down as president of Dacia again and, in April 2017, the Moldovan government began working on a case against him for tax evasion and money laundering. Months later, Shishkhanov fled Moldova and began looking for a new home and a new club.

Banned...the Latvian club's Olimpiskais Stadium

For Ventspils, the timing was unfortunate. The club had won six Virsliga titles between 2006 and 2014 and qualified for the Europa League group stage in 2009-10, but the owner who had funded that success, Yuri Bespalov, died in 2012. The local council was funding the club and by 2017 wanted a buyer.

Shishkhanov had a contact in Latvia in the Russian Oleg Gavrilov, who is also banned from football for life for his earlier involvement in an alleged match-fixing scheme that killed off 2012 Latvian champions Daugava Daugavpils.

> **Ventspils cannot return to European football until 2027-28 but that seems a long way off. After being banned, the club pulled out of this season's Latvian top flight – Virsliga – and their results were expunged**

In March 2018, Dacia quit that year's Moldovan Championship and a month later, after a police raid on the club, Shishkhanov was accused of tax evasion and money laundering, including paying clubs in cash in envelopes, which had avoided nearly 10m Moldovan Lei (£460,000) in tax.

By now, the Chechen was in control at Ventspils, where respected English coach Paul Ashworth soon left and was then followed by players. In their place came players and back-up staff from Dacia.

That summer, a Europa League qualifier with Albanian club Luftetari Gjirokaster attracted attention after Ventspils conceded a shambolic equaliser in injury time to draw 3-3. The Latvians had been 5-0 up from the first leg and went through 8-3 on aggregate before losing to Bordeaux in the next round.

More games played by Ventspils generated alerts for suspicious betting movements, including a 1-0 defeat to Norwegian third-division side Jerv during a training camp in Marbella in Spain in 2019.

"In the heat of the moment, it looked as if Ventspils pushed every man into the attack, in an attempt to win," Jerv coach Arne Sandsto told *Bergensavisen (BA)*. "This resulted in us having six big chances alone with the keeper in the last minute. The referees must have reported it to UEFA as a possible case of match-fixing."

In the 2019-20 Europa League,

Ventspils reached the third qualifying round, which guaranteed €780,000 in UEFA prize money and were then thrashed 6-0 in Portugal by Vitoria de Guimaraes in another game marked by suspicious betting movements.

Shishkhanov was often at odds with the Latvian Football Federation (LFF) and was banned twice for abusing match officials. In April 2020, he officially resigned as Ventspils president but a Europa League qualifier that summer between the club and Moldovan side Dinamo-Auto Tiraspol was removed from some betting markets before kick-off.

In August 2020, Shishkhanov was put on a Latvian state blacklist for his involvement in a criminal case relating to allegedly hidden salary payments, and finally in June came UEFA's lifetime ban.

Shishkhanov will not be back but the match-fixing has not gone away in Latvia. A month after the Ventspils ban, the LFF suspended three players from Armenian-owned club Noah Jurmala for a year. The case has been passed to Latvian state prosecutors, who have tried to tackle the problem in the past, but the three banned players from Serbia, Ghana and the Ukraine are likely to be long gone from the Baltic before any prosecution arrives.

Steve Menary

Munir El Haddadi

Pressure is on the forward to deliver after his long-awaited switch from Spain to Morocco

Morocco's bid for a return to the World Cup finals will be spearheaded by the Spanish-born Munir El Haddadi, the former Barcelona prodigy, whom the north Africans have invested much effort and resource in procuring.

He has overcome several legal blocks to make the switch from Spain to Morocco, and will be the lead attacker in Morocco's African qualifiers for Qatar 2022 against Sudan, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in Group I amid much expectation.

The 26-year-old Sevilla forward is among the first footballers to profit from another tweak in FIFA's nationality laws, although not without much drama and perseverance on the part of his parents' home country.

It began before the last World Cup in Russia, when Morocco made a cheeky bid to get him into their squad for the 2018 finals. Yet, because he had already played for Spain in a European Championship qualifier against Macedonia in September 2014, when he came on as a substitute and played less than 15 minutes, this was not allowed.

Then the FIFA rules on nationality switches were clear: you could change allegiance only if you had not played a competitive full international. But Morocco persisted to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, who kicked out their case.

At the FIFA Congress one year ago, Morocco proposed a change to the rules in a direct bid to get Munir eligible.

Their proposal, that players could switch countries if they have played no more than three internationals at senior level, with all the appearances coming before the player turns 21, was accepted. Appearances in World Cup finals or continental finals, such as the European Championship or Africa Cup of Nations would prohibit a change of eligibility, but appearing in a qualifier would not.

***La Roja*...Munir won his only Spain cap back in 2014**

> [Munir] is among the first footballers to profit from another tweak in FIFA's nationality laws, although not without much drama and perseverance on the part of his parents' home country

Morocco then applied for Munir's nationality to change, only for FIFA to again reject it – not because of his single senior cap, but because he had played for Spain's Under-21s a few months after turning 21.

More furious lobbying, and some political horse-trading around the Confederation of African Football presidential elections, then led FIFA to decide that the rule on the age limit would only apply from the date of the last Congress, therefore allowing Munir to make his Morocco debut.

It came in an Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Mauritania, which ended goalless, and was followed four days later by a second cap in a match-winning performance against Burundi, where he scored the game's only goal as Morocco finished the campaign top of their group. He has since featured in two June friendlies.

Munir was a teenage sensation with Barcelona but has not yet lived up to his early potential, going out on loan to Valencia and then Deportivo Alaves before moving to Sevilla in early 2019.

Morocco might offer him the outlet that he failed to grab with Spain, but he is under immense pressure to deliver on all the effort that the football association have made to get him into their team.

Mark Gleeson

Morocco...Munir celebrates scoring his first international goal against Burundi

Ligue 1

Financial disaster averted for both the league and Girondins de Bordeaux, but problems still remain

Following a year of uncertainty, legal battles and financial strife, streaming service Amazon Prime Video have finally ended Ligue 1's television broadcast rights debacle.

At the start of last season, Spanish broadcaster Mediapro led a €1.1 billion per-season agreement – the second-biggest domestic TV rights deal after the Premier League's – that was seen as a watershed moment for Ligue 1. But Mediapro's streaming service, Telefoot, quickly collapsed, with subscriptions falling short of ambitious projections.

Although a temporary arrangement was found with Canal Plus to cover the rest of the 2020-21 campaign, the final three seasons of the four-year block remained in flux as the LFP searched for a new lead broadcaster.

Amazon's last-minute bid secured broadcast rights for Mediapro's initial 80 per cent share of Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 matches. But their agreement to show eight games per week for €300 million per year reduced the overall package by 42 per cent, leaving Canal Plus paying €330m for just two games per round, an agreement left over from the initial deal with Mediapro.

Canal, meanwhile, were furious to be locked into their original price in spite of what they saw as an obvious devaluation of the product, and initially refused to pay their share to beIN Sports, from whom they sub-licence the rights. A court battle ensued. Although Canal eventually agreed to respect their initial agreement, both broadcasters jointly made a complaint to the European Commission over the LFP's handling of the saga.

Amazon Prime, who have added Thierry Henry to their punditry team, will charge €12.99 per month for access to their share of Ligue 1 games, on top of the €6 per month required to be a Prime customer. A marked decrease on the monthly €24.99 Telefoot charged last season.

In a typical piece of bad timing for the LFP, a final agreement was sorted just days before Lionel Messi's arrival at PSG, a move that should have boosted the price significantly. Nevertheless, the security of a broadcast deal will be a relief to Ligue 1 clubs who've struggled desperately in the last 18 months, particularly Bordeaux, who ended last season on the verge of bankruptcy.

Resolution...Amazon's late bid provided a solution for the LFP

Luxembourg businessman Gerard Lopez successfully rescued *Les Girondins* from financial oblivion last month, despite being forced out of Lille last Christmas for failing to pay debts to US investment fund Elliott Management.

Following the sudden withdrawal of support from previous investors King Street at the end of last season, Bordeaux's very survival was at stake, having been placed under the protection of a commercial court pending administration.

> The security of a broadcast deal will be a relief to Ligue 1 clubs…particularly Bordeaux, who ended last season on the verge of bankruptcy

Having barely maintained their top-flight status on the pitch last season, Bordeaux were even provisionally relegated by French football's strict financial watchdog, the DNCG, due to the gaping hole in their budget, though Lopez was able to successfully convince the DNCG of his new project's validity upon appeal and overturn the decision.

His next move was to replace head coach Jean-Louis Gasset with Vladimir Petkovic, fresh from guiding Switzerland to the quarter-finals of Euro 2020.

As well as suggesting he would rectify some unpopular decisions by King Street, including restoring the club's former badge and full name, Lopez stated he wanted to instil a "mindset and culture of winning. We will aim for the top half of the Ligue 1 table and to play in Europe within three years."

Despite the security offered by the new deal, Bordeaux and the majority of Ligue 1 remain under significant financial strain due to the diminished nature of the agreement, with transfer expenditure heavily reduced this summer. PSG might have signed Messi and made him the highest-paid player in the world, but the financial realities of the clubs chasing them in Ligue 1 remains markedly different.

Adam White for GFFN

New arrivals... Bordeaux's new coach Vladimir Petkovic (left) with club president Gerard Lopez (right)

Derby County

Championship club face an uncertain future after a turbulent year

Before the season had even begun, some bookmakers had stopped taking bets on Derby County being relegated from the Championship.

And who could blame them? The club has spent the summer in turmoil, dealing with fines, court cases and a transfer embargo. Last season they stayed up thanks to a points deduction for Sheffield Wednesday.

It was a rare moment of fortune for a club that has suffered one crisis after another in recent years. The pandemic has been tough on every EFL team, but none have had their problems compounded by bad luck and bad decisions quite as much as Derby, whose issues predate COVID.

How did things become so bad? It is difficult to know where to start. Owner Mel Morris has been trying to sell the club for at least 12 months. His six years in charge have seen the club contrive to throw away promotion on multiple occasions, reaching the play-offs three times. At the start of this year, he told the *Mail on Sunday* that owning the club had cost him £200m – certainly not the first person to throw a fortune at chasing Premier League promotion, and not the last.

The money has been running out for some time, with the club coming up with increasingly creative ways to continue spending. In 2018, Morris bought the stadium, Pride Park, for £80m and leased it back in order to boost income and account for the mounting debts.

Then, when Wayne Rooney arrived in August 2019, he wore number 32 – a reference to betting site 32Red, whose sponsorship helped fund the signing.

In November 2020, Morris agreed to sell the club to Sheikh Khaled, a cousin of Manchester City owner Sheikh Mansour. Things were going badly on the pitch, with manager Phillip Cocu replaced by Rooney, but the prospect of fresh investment offered hope.

But by December, the takeover had stalled, and players' salaries were not being paid. In January, Rooney deferred his own wages (believed to be around £90,000-a-week) to ensure his players were paid. By March, the deal was off and, when a second takeover bid fell through in May, the future looked bleak.

First job...Rooney took charge of Derby in November 2020

Just to add to the financial woes, that month they were also ordered to pay £2.3m to former captain Richard Keogh for a breach of his contract.

Having narrowly avoided relegation, the club were hit with a £100,000 fine for failing to comply with FFP rules, and ordered to resubmit their accounts for 2016, 2017 and 2018. A points deduction, which would have seen them relegated, was even on the cards, and the club was placed under severe transfer restrictions until the accounts were in order.

Over the summer, the bad news didn't stop. Rooney made it onto the front pages of several newspapers after a series of photos of him at a party in a hotel room were leaked. In the same week, he was all over the back pages for injuring one of his key players, Jason Knight, after joining in with training. The Republic of Ireland midfielder was ruled out for three months – bad news at the best of times, but County's squad was already severely depleted.

Talented...Derby are the 12th club of Morrison's career

During pre-season, Knight was one of just nine seniors players contracted to the club. Several free agents came in on trial and, just before the season started, many were handed contracts. The only problem was that no wages could be offered; until the club could confirm what they would be allowed to spend, the paper was left blank.

Deals were eventually sorted for a number of players, including former Everton defender Phil Jagielka and Rooney's old Manchester United team-mate Ravel Morrison. But in another twist, ex-Turkey forward Colin Kazim-Richards, who had extended his deal at the club in February for the 2021-22 season, tore his Achilles in just his second league game of the season.

In spite of everything, the season did not start as disastrously as expected, with four points from the first three games. There have been encouraging performances from Morrison, among others, and Rooney is hopeful he can succeed where so many others have failed in getting the best out of the hugely talented midfielder.

Off the pitch, there is still much to resolve and, at the time of writing, a points deduction is still possible. It is set to be a long season, probably the greatest test of Rooney's career.

Jamie Evans

ADÉU, LEO

The fallout from Lionel Messi's departure from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain continues. Colin Millar reports…

As Lionel Messi boarded his private jet in Ibiza to return to Barcelona, he believed he would be signing the contract that would allow him to see out his career at the Nou Camp.

His first flight to the Catalan capital had been as a 13-year-old, in 2000, when he slept on the journey from Buenos Aires ahead of a trial at Barca. So fearful were the club that the talented teenager may have signed elsewhere, director Charly Rexach, with no other paper at hand, offered a written contract on a paper napkin.

Fast-forward 21 years and there would be no paper napkin and no contract offer; there could not be. The Argentine was told by club president Joan Laporta that, after a club-record 778 first-team appearances and a club-record 672 goals (a figure so absurd, it is higher than the sums of the second, third and fourth highest scorers for the club combined), there would be no more. There could be no more.

Barca are in an economic crisis; their club debt stands at an eye-watering €1.35 billion – a figure that has grown by €200 million since January, despite various cost-saving measures.

Days after Messi returned home, the club released the news that stunned the sporting world: "Lionel Messi will not continue at Barcelona." A notably brief and somewhat emotionless statement added that "financial and structural obstacles" from "La Liga regulations" had ensured that renewing Messi's contract was simply not possible.

The 34-year-old held an emotional farewell press conference three days later, in which he said that his "blood ran cold" after hearing the news, telling reporters: "I offered to reduce my salary by 50 per cent and they didn't ask me for anything else.

"It is not true that they asked me for anything more. I only know that it was not possible because of La Liga, because the club did not want to go into more debt."

The reason for this is that Barca are currently operating above their salary limit – a cap imposed by La Liga, as voted for by its member clubs, that means all clubs must operate within their spending capabilities.

These budgetary limits for each club are calculated based on their earnings, revenue streams, profits and losses, overhead costs, investments, and debt repayments. Audits are carried out on the financial health of every club, with the limits designed to ensure their growth and spending are sustainable and for all outgoings to be justified by income.

Barca's spiralling club debts mean that their budget for the 2021-22 campaign is projected to be capped at €160m – the closest comparison to an English Premier League club is Everton, who last season had a wage bill of €158.5m. To put this into further perspective, the Catalan club's wage bill in the 2019-20 campaign stood at €671m – the highest in world sport, and over four times what it is today.

After the closure of the January

FC

transfer window for new player registrations in La Liga, any new signings or new deals would have to be processed by La Liga this summer and, if any club were operating above their limit, those contracts would not be sanctioned. Messi may have offered to cut his wage by 50 per cent to stay at the Nou Camp, but the league would have rejected any proposal if the club could not streamline their outgoings.

Barca – who sold high earners Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic the previous summer to slash outgoings – were operating approximately €200m over their budget even without Messi on their books. Had Messi stayed, Barcelona's annual salary would have accounted for 110 per cent of their income and without him it stood at 95 per cent. They had to get that figure down to around 70 per cent to comply with the rules.

Critics suggest that La Liga's budgetary restrictions are unnecessarily strict and failed to adapt to account for the short-term financial ramifications caused by COVID-19 when club revenue streams – particularly those of Barca and Real Madrid – nosedived.

The *Blaugrana*, in particular, operated a high-risk business model with eye-watering costs being maintained temporarily by significant revenue streams. When the pandemic struck, stadiums shut, tours were halted, club museums closed and the income plummeted – leaving sky-high costs and spiralling debts.

Messi stay...Barca fans protest outside Leo's final press conference

Under pressure... Barca president Joan Laporta

Timing is everything. As Barcelona confirmed Messi's exit – leaving the football world reeling and attempting to digest the news – their *Clasico* rivals Real Madrid released a near-simultaneous statement of their own, which also attacked the league.

Earlier in the week, La Liga announced that they had struck a landmark deal with private equity firm CVC, which would inject €2.7bn into the league in exchange for ten per cent of its audio-visual revenue and a ten per cent stake in most of its business in a long-term agreement, with 90 per cent of the injection going to clubs.

Legacy...the trophies Messi won at Barcelona

Such investment would provide an immediate, and much-needed, cash injection into clubs throughout the top two divisions of Spanish football to help alleviate short-term financial worries. The proposal passed following a club vote – 38 clubs voted in favour, four voted against. Barcelona and Real Madrid both objected to the deal.

In theory, the income would have afforded Barca the funds to register a new contract offer for Messi, alongside three new summer signings at the club (Eric Garcia, Memphis Depay and Sergio Aguero), who were only later registered following agreed player-wage cuts elsewhere in the squad. Yet they decided not to accept the proposal and publicly claimed that the league was undervaluing its future rights. Club president Laporta said he would not be prepared to "mortgage the club for half a century" – referencing the CVC investment – to commit Messi to a new agreement.

Real Madrid went further in attacking the league's plans, claiming that they were undertaking "civil and criminal legal action" against La Liga and its president, Javier Tebas, over the investment proposal.

La Liga chief Tebas immediately hit back at Real Madrid president Florentino Perez, accusing him of "threatening methods" over the course of "years" that have been used "in private" against "the clubs and institutions of La Liga".

The gloves were off. This was open warfare.

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Three days after La Liga's confirmation of their investment from CVC, Real Madrid supremo Perez met his Barca counterpart Laporta in the Catalan capital. They were joined by Andrea Agnelli, chairman of Juventus.

The gloves were off. This was open warfare

These are the three clubs who remained committed to the idea of a so-called European Super League, the de facto proposals of top clubs to break free from what they saw as the shackles of UEFA and other football bodies throughout Europe. The trio continue to release joint-statements backing the plans – they believe the idea is a golden ticket to solving their financial issues and securing their permanent status as elite clubs.

La Liga president Tebas was among the most vocal opponents to the plans, driven by the suspicion that the rival clubs – who were initially joined by Atletico Madrid, who later withdrew their support – would lead to the break away from his league, who were attempting to draw up a more equitable distribution of income and implement sustainable models of economic growth.

In the simplest terms, the CVC investment – and their contractual ties to the audio-visual rights of La Liga clubs – would kill off any lingering hopes of a Super League, which Barca and Madrid continue to promote. The league believed that commitment to this investment would tie down its two most profitable and marketable clubs in a long-term agreement, in which La Liga – and not the clubs – were in the driving seat.

This is a battle for power that is being played out in the public eye, not just between clubs and governing bodies but also between hugely influential and self-confident individuals. Spanish football and its clubs are inherently political – club presidents are elected by and accountable to club *socios* – and power of personality counts. Perez, Laporta and Tebas are three political heavyweights, and none are prepared to cede any ground in this increasingly fractured division.

The stand-off has made allies of natural enemies – Real Madrid and Barcelona are now side-by-side in fighting for, what they fundamentally believe, is the natural outcome for European football – as leagues and organisations continue to extinguish the flames, insisting that the proposals are steeped in greed, self-interest and a lack of accountability.

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By this stage, Messi was jetting off again – this time for Paris, where he would sign a two-year contract with PSG. Gerard Pique, his former *La Masia* team-mate was revealed to have taken a pay-cut, insisting that the club's three other captains and academy graduates, Sergio Busquets, Sergi Roberto and Jordi Alba, would join him in doing so to help keep the club afloat.

Yet the one player that they were most desperate to keep was ultimately the one whom they could not. Beyond the utterly absurd numbers demonstrating his relentless genius and longevity, it is the memories and history that will leave the most profound impact – this was indisputably an era of true greatness.

The future for Barcelona, Real Madrid, La Liga and the power battles for European football remains infinitely less clear.

eye witness

Ben Bocsak reports

ZAMBIA

Kafue Celtic: helping put Zambian football on the map

ABOVE LEFT: Arrivals... Daka and Mwepu at their new Premier League clubs

The roughly 200,000 population of Kafue, a Southern town in the province of Lusaka in Zambia, would only fill Leicester City's King Power and Brighton's Amex Stadium four times before you would start running out of people. Yet the town's local club, Kafue Celtic, has produced two of Zambia's brightest stars.

Before this year, only three Zambians had ever played in the Premier League – Emmanuel Mayuka, Collins Mbesuma and Neil Gregory – and between them they only managed 23 appearances. This summer, however, that number increased by two, thanks to Enock Mwepu and Patson Daka, both products of Kafue Celtic.

Back when the project began almost two decades ago, Lee Kawanu, the club's founder and director, could have never envisaged what it would become.

In 2002, Kawanu was a fresh college graduate who had just returned to his hometown in Kafue. Savvy for business, Kawanu embarked on multiple ventures in the computer industry when he was approached by locals looking for sponsors to help fund a new team in the town.

"Their thinking was to put all the best players together from the local area and make one strong team that would register with the football association of Zambia," Kawanu recalls to *World Soccer*.

Kawanu's father managed local side Nitrogen Stars, a successful team in the 1980s and 1990s, who were later disbanded. The opportunity to continue his father's legacy and revive the football scene in Kafue was one Lee could not refuse.

"My dad used to take us to games every weekend. Sometimes we would travel with the players, so it was easy to just fall in love with the game at that kind of intimate level.

"Growing up, you dream about owning your own football club. So I told myself: 'I'm not sure if I can do this, but let me see if it's worth it.'"

Kawanu's team, then called Kafue FC, would start on the bottom of Zambia's footballing pyramid. But the town rallied

Kafue Celtic graduates...Daka and Mwepu celebrate with last season's Austrian double

Before this year, only three Zambians had ever played in the Premier League…this summer that number increased by two, thanks to Enock Mwepu and Patson Daka, both products of Kafue Celtic

behind them and under Kawanu's guidance the club enjoyed admirable early success.

"We started in the amateur leagues. I registered a team and that's how we started. We went the entire season unbeaten and won promotion all the way to the second division as Kafue FC. I named the team after the town just to get Kafue back on the Zambian football map."

When assembling the team, Kawanu had to think frugally. His astute business background meant he wanted to build a viable and long-lasting future. So, Kawanu sought out Kafue's brightest young talent.

"When I started Kafue FC, most of the players were from schools, they were all youngsters. Initially I could not afford older players, so over the years I just got used to dealing with younger players," he explains.

Founder and director... Lee Kawanu

Fast-forward to 2009 and things

were taking shape. A year prior, based on the success of Kafue FC, Kawanu was offered the licence for another local club called Lusaka Celtic after sponsors pulled out. Kawanu used the two licenses to merge Lusaka Celtic and Kafue FC into one institution called Kafue Celtic.

2009 also marked Kawanu's first major sale to a European club. Russian outfit, Ural, bought Chisamba Lungu from Kafue Celtic, which affirmed Kawanu's philosophy and vision.

"At the time I rebranded, and I saw the need to prepare players at a young age for Europe. We have always been the team known locally as the ones who supply youngsters to the bigger clubs.

"After selling Chisamba, I realised I now had to look around the country, not just Kafue and Lusaka, for players. I would watch school competitions with my coaches and see which players could fit into our team."

Kafue's reputation grew, as did Kawanu's. In 2012, he was recognised for his efforts and became an executive board member of the Zambian FA overseeing the country's youth development.

"That opened my eyes up to even more opportunities. I had the chance to interact with people in all the provinces to help us with the national teams. It's how I discovered players like Enock [Mwepu]."

Things did not always go according to plan. Failure, like success, is just a part of life. And in the early days Kawanu learned more from his mistakes than the successes.

"In the beginning I had special players, but they never ended up anywhere, because they had the wrong character. They would get too easily distracted, start drinking and just lose their way.

"So, after that experience, when I was scouting players, I tried to do more of an investigation into the background of the player, what set-up they are in, their families and stuff like that."

One particular player who was groomed by Kawanu was Patson Daka. The new Leicester City forward, whose late father played in the same Nitrogen Stars team that was managed by Kawanu's father, is a fellow local to Kafue and started his football at Kawanu's club from a young age.

"It's hard to find ways to describe how much the club means to me," Daka tells *World Soccer*. "They are part of the reason for who I am today. They have played a big role in my career. Lee [Kawanu] gave me the opportunity to start my dream. Kafue Celtic means life to me."

Champions...players celebrating with last season's title medals

In Daka's case, Kawanu's role went beyond just a coach or club director. He became Patson's mentor.

"He believed in me even when other people didn't," Daka remembers. "Lee encouraged me and helped me make the right decisions. He supported me and my family, making sure we had everything that we needed. He has been like a father to me."

Enock Mwepu, who Kawanu discovered during his scouting trips across Zambia's Copperbelt, is also forever indebted to his former mentor.

"It was difficult for me to leave my parents and go to Kafue Celtic," Enock says. "What took me there was football... All I wanted was to play football, and I found it at Kafue Celtic."

Like with Daka, Kawanu became Enock's guide. A shoulder to lean on, especially in the early stages, when Mwepu had to adjust to life away from his family for the first time as a teenager.

> "It's hard to find ways to describe how much the club means to me. They are part of the reason for who I am today…Kafue Celtic means life to me"
>
> **Leicester City striker Patson Daka**

"I remember Mr. Lee [Kawanu] saying that, if I can be strong enough to stay and make it here at Celtic then, wherever I will go, I will make it. I carried his words with me. Today his words are helping me to stay strong and try my best to make it in my dream league [the Premier League]."

Squad photo... Kafue Celtic

Adviser...former Premier League striker Frederic Kanoute

With Mwepu and Daka, Kawanu's hard work was justified. The pair of them played major roles in securing victory for Zambia at the Under-20 AFCON in 2017 on home soil.

The ultimate piece in the jigsaw was the influence of former African Player of the Year Freddie Kanoute. The ex-West Ham United and Tottenham forward developed an agency called 12Management in 2015, intending to bring more African players to Europe. It was in Kanoute's quest to find talent that led to him meeting with Kawanu, and the pair bonded.

"Things have changed a lot since I started working with him. He is a big part of what Kafue Celtic is today," Kawanu says. "Fred has taken us to a whole new level. We were big in the nation in terms of player production, but Fred opened us up to the rest of the world."

Kanoute works with Kafue Celtic as a consultant. He provides access to coaching training from the UK, and his agency represents both Mwepu and Daka. And with his links to clubs around the world, Kanoute has helped facilitate more opportunities for Kafue.

Last season, the club earned promotion to the Zambian Premier League with a squad that had an average age of 20 and will become the youngest team in the history of the country's top flight. Kawanu's vision of developing youth has made Kafue Celtic one of the most talked about clubs in the Zambia.

"That's the reason I joined Celtic, because it was a team that knew how to give new opportunities and chances to young players like me," Mwepu says.

"He gives a lot of young people a chance," Daka agrees. "He helps players grow because he has so much patience and ability to build relationships with people."

Kawanu admits securing promotion was a very "special" moment for the club. Especially on a personal level considering he has been trying to get Kafue Celtic to the Super League for almost two decades. But his future vision goes beyond ambitions for his own club.

"My big dream is for us to have 20 academies like Kafue Celtic in Zambia. People say if you have competition, it's impossible to compete but that's not true because we have enough talent to go round. If we had 20 Kafue Celtics doing what we are doing, all we would do is open up even more opportunities and open up Zambia to the rest of the world."

Return...Daka returned to donate Kafue Celtic's kit for last season

Patson Daka and Enock Mwepu have already helped put Kafue on the map. With Kawanu's perseverance, more may soon follow their suit. And with Barcelona opening an academy in nearby Lusaka, Kawanu's future vision may not be far away either.

eyewitness

James Kelly reports

TURKEY

Curses, debts and marquee signings

Adana Demirspor are determined to make their mark on their first Turkish top-flight appearance since 1995

In many ways it all felt so familiar. A figure emerging from the airport terminal, club scarf draped around his neck, sunglasses protecting against a blazing hot summer's day. Outside a throng of fans were eager to catch a glimpse of their new hero, whose name they deliriously chanted. Scores of phone cameras recorded the moment, as the player slowly trudged through the crowd towards a waiting minivan.

As Didier Drogba, Robin van Persie, Ricardo Quaresma and plenty of others can attest, this type of welcome for a marquee signing is the norm in Turkey.

What is less frequently seen though, are the colours adorning Mario Balotelli's scarf. These are not the black and white of Besiktas, Fenerbahce's blue and yellow, nor the famous red and yellow of Galatasaray; rather they are the sky and navy blue of Adana Demirspor.

Based in the south of Anatolia, Turkey's Asian landmass, Adana is only marginally closer to the capital of Ankara than Lebanon's Beirut. With a population of some 1.8 million people, it is Turkey's fifth-largest settlement and one of the nation's most important cities.

Home of the famous Adana kebab, natives are renowned for their equally fiery temperament. A perfect home, it would appear then, for the temperamental Italian.

"They say that Balotelli is crazy but nobody has to worry: we are from Adana and we will be able to manage him," club president Murat Sancak told *A Spor* upon the announcement of the signing in July.

Understandably for Demirspor fans, Balotelli's signing is exciting. Here is a player who has played for some of the world's biggest clubs, now pledging his allegiance to their beloved ADS.

The symbolism however extends beyond Balotelli's status. Given how this Super Lig season is Demirspor's first in the top flight for 26 years, it was a statement: we are back.

The past three decades have been full of turmoil for Demirspor supporters. Since the club were relegated in 1995, they have had to endure arguably the worst luck of any fan base.

Over the past 15 seasons Demirspor have lost in promotion play-offs on no fewer than nine occasions. For a club that have one of Anatolia's largest and most loyal followings, it got to the point where many supporters believed their team was cursed.

One of two clubs in Adana – alongside Joachim Low's former employers Adanaspor – Demirspor hold the distinction of being the first club outside Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir to play in the national league.

Formed in 1940 by workers of Turkey's state railway company, whose logo still adorns the club badge, Demirspor have a largely working-class, left-wing support base. Livorno in particular have a good friendship with main supporter

Balotelli...in action for Adana Demirspor at the Yeni Adana Stadium

group *Mavi Simsekler* (Blue Lightning).

They say such phenomenon never strikes twice, but for Demirspor fans that would be incorrect. Their misfortune began during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when they were promoted and relegated three times each.

The club then ended up in the third division in 1999, where they spent much of the next decade and a half. It took five play-off attempts to return to the second division, and such bad luck persisted.

In 2014-15 Demirspor, four points clear in second, took just two points from their final six games. They then lost to Antalyaspor in the play-off semi-finals. In both 2016 and 2020 they were just a penalty shootout away from the Super Lig.

Never disheartened, Demirspor bounced back to win the second tier last season. But true to form, this wasn't without drama. ADS went into the final day in a three-way fight for the title, level on points with Giresunspor and Samsunspor. Anything but a win meant they risked slipping into the play-offs, and fans could have been forgiven for thinking that their curse was about to strike again. Thankfully, those fears were assuaged by a comfortable 4-1 win at Menemenspor to end their exile.

Central to this long-awaited ascension back to the Super Lig is club president Sancak, who assumed his position in September 2018. The businessman, who partly made his fortune selling nappies and other medical supplies, also sits on the board of vehicle manufacturing giant BMC.

Reunited...Balotelli and Belhanda both joined Nice in 2016

New ground...the Yeni Adana Stadium

One of his first moves at Demirspor was to sign former Manchester United midfielder Anderson. The Champions League winner made minimal impact, retiring at the club last September, but the gauntlet had been laid down.

Last season, experienced duo Aurelien Chedjou and Gokhan Inler were brought in, and the bar has been raised even higher this summer.

Alongside Balotelli is Moroccan playmaker Younes Belhanda and ex-Tottenham Hotspur utility man Benjamin Stambouli. Other notable additions include Norway right-back Jonas Svensson (AZ), Lucas Castro (Fatih Karagumruk), Arijanet Muric (on loan from Manchester City) and Britt Assombalonga (Middlesbrough).

On paper it looks like a team with more than enough pedigree to consolidate a decent position away from danger. Yet a more cynical eye would suggest most of the signings pose big question marks.

"While Balotelli and Belhanda are big, sexy names, just signing them alone won't guarantee success," says Demirspor supporter Bora Uluturk. "Especially with their fiery histories; they might even hinder the squad more than help it."

It's been 11 years since Balotelli won the Golden Boy award. His past two seasons have consisted of failing to keep Brescia in Serie A, followed by not being able to fire Monza into it. Last term he didn't even rank among Serie B's top 40 goalscorers.

Such delusions of grandeur were hardly helped when the notoriously outspoken Sancak announced that Balotelli had come to Demirspor to go to next year's World Cup in Qatar. With the *Azzurri* winning the European Championship just days after the striker's signing, you have to say that looks fanciful at best.

Perhaps Demirspor's theory is that by pairing Balotelli with his old team-mate Belhanda, the years might roll back to when the duo fired Nice to third in Ligue 1 in 2016-17.

The Moroccan playmaker has also arrived on a free, having been sacked by Galatasaray in March for criticising the state of their pitch. His departure was met with indifference by fans, many of whom felt Belhanda had been performing below par for some time.

Over the past 15 seasons, Demirspor have lost in promotion play-offs on no fewer than nine occasions... many supporters believed their team was cursed

The impact other signings will have is also something of a mystery. Stambouli is 31 and comes in as damaged goods on the back of Schalke's relegation. Meanwhile Svensson spent part of last season out with a thigh problem.

The biggest quandary though is how Demirspor have managed to afford such deals, especially with the Turkish lira at its lowest-ever rate. Balotelli has penned a three-year deal through to 2024, by which point he'll be nearly 34. ADS had also been linked with signing David Luiz on a €4 million, two-year deal, following his release by Arsenal.

Sancak's close ties to president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AKP party may provide a clue as to how the project is being funded.

In June, Mafia boss turned YouTube whistle-blower Sedat Peker claimed that Erdogan's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, was staying at the Demirspor president's house, away from public view after resigning as finance minister.

Meanwhile, Sancak's cousin Ethem also has close ties to Erdogan. Under his ownership, the newspaper *Star Gazetesi* took a strong pro-AKP line, while he once declared he was in "spiritual love" with Erdogan, and that his entire family would be sacrificed for the president.

Both cousins are now involved with BMC, a car manufacturer that has also been treated favourably by the regime. BMC was granted 23.7 million feet of public land by Erdogan for future investment, and awarded a €9 billion contract to manufacture Turkey's first domestically-assembled tank.

"It definitely smells very fishy," Uluturk tells *World Soccer*. "In Turkey when something seems too good to be true, there's usually some shadiness or corruption behind it."

Demirspor fans do not need reminding of such reality. In August 2010, former president and lifelong supporter Bekir Cinar committed suicide after his dream of returning Demirspor to Super Lig plunged him into heavy debt.

One way of avoiding another such tragedy could be Demirspor's new Yeni Adana Stadium. This was built at a cost of 140 million TL and is hosting crowds for the first time this season, having opened in February. Like many new builds in Turkey, it is owned by the state.

The 33,500-seater stadium, which is shared with bitter rivals Adanaspor, offers Demirspor the opportunity to generate funds. Sancak has announced that an executive box will cost a minimum of 5,000 TL (approximately €490), in line with other top Super Lig clubs.

Time will tell if this alone is enough to prop up Sancak's Demirspor project. However, as a man who narrowly escaped an apparent assassination attempt in 2015, he doesn't need to be told life is for living.

Whilst it is unclear where the money for signings has come from, the mere opportunity to see Demirspor back in Super Lig is something to be celebrated. Whatever happens off the pitch, after a quarter of a century away, fans can enjoy their moment back in the notoriously hot Adana sun.

New boy...Sancak welcomes Lucas Castro to the club

The road to Russia

James Nalton takes a look at the contenders for this season's Champions League…

Holders…Chelsea celebrate in last season's final v Manchester City

A final in Saint Petersburg's picturesque Krestovsky Stadium will be the reward for two of the 32 teams who make it to UEFA's showpiece event in 2022.

European football is in a state of flux off the pitch, and that's not solely down to the pandemic. Even the biggest clubs are struggling to find their place in the grand scheme of things after the failure of Super League plans that threatened the prestige of this competition.

There are changes on the pitch too. Away goals will not be used for the first time since the 1966-67 season after UEFA scrapped the rule across all of its continental competitions.

Despite the financial issues, the usual names are still expected to be in the mix for Europe's top prize. None more so than the English Premier League clubs, whose slightly more robust league structure and big-money television deals have helped them weather the storm, or at least suffer less damage.

New boy…can Grealish help Manchester City achieve the Holy Grail?

ENGLAND EXPECTS

Three of the last four finals have featured Premier League sides, with two of those being all-English affairs.

Defending champions **Chelsea** are contenders again as they head into their first full season under Thomas Tuchel. The German has a strong squad at his disposal, including midfield metronome Jorginho who impressed with European champions Italy this summer. With N'Golo Kante alongside him, the London club have one of the best engine rooms in the competition, while the re-signing of former striker Romelu Lukaku from Inter should remedy their goal-shy attack.

Manchester City reached their first final last season and though they were unable to clear the last hurdle, Pep Guardiola's talented squad - now also featuring £100 million signing Jack Grealish – will be one of the big favourites to lift the trophy in 2022.

Liverpool, meanwhile, will be hoping to rediscover the form that saw them reach consecutive finals in 2018 and 2019. Jurgen Klopp has key defenders Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez back from long-term injury – and bolstered the back-line further with the £36m signing of France U21 centre-back Ibrahima Konate from RB Leipzig – while forwards Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane should be refreshed after a rare summer off.

One player who had a busier summer was Jadon Sancho. He may not have been a prominent player for England at the Euros, but the rumours of his eventual transfer to **Manchester United** rumbled on throughout. United have also secured the signing of Raphael Varane from Real Madrid; Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side, it seems, mean business.

THE BIG NAMES

Aiming to halt this English mini-revival are some of the behemoths of European football. Germany's **Bayern Munich** won the Champions League as part of a treble in 2020 and will be a force to be reckoned with. Julian Nagelsmann has replaced Hansi Flick in the dugout, with highly-rated French defender Dayot Upamecano also arriving from RB Leipzig.

Barcelona's administrative struggles continue, and Ronald Koeman's biggest challenge will be to stop those issues transmitting onto the pitch. This will be their first Champions League campaign without Lionel Messi since 2002-03 and, if other players do not step in to fill the void left by the Argentine's departure, they may be facing the prospect of a first group-stage exit for over 20 years.

Real Madrid are also going through a transitional period. Although the *Galacticos* are a thing of the past, the Spanish giants still boast an array of talented players and, as the competition's most successful side, the club's name is enough to intimidate any European opposition.

That *Galacticos* label has now been adopted by 2021 semi-finalists, **Paris Saint-Germain**. Their prioritising of Champions League glory is no secret and they've signed Gianluigi Donnarumma, Achraf Hakimi, Georginio Wijnaldum, Sergio Ramos and, of course, Messi to that end. Indeed, winning the trophy is no longer simply a target: it is an absolute must. With such talent at their disposal, failing to end their wait would be considered an abject failure.

Similarly, **Juventus** have never hidden their European ambition. Their addition of Cristiano Ronaldo back in 2018 in an attempt to secure the trophy has so far failed, but they'll have one more shot at the continental crown with the Portugal megastar before his contract expires.

Pressure on...PSG ace Kylian Mbappe

Final hosts...the Krestovsky Stadium

REFRESHING CHAMPIONS

Serie A, Ligue 1 and La Liga all crowned somewhat offbeat champions last season. In Italy, **Internazionale** prevented Juventus from winning their tenth title in a row; **Lille** ended PSG's similar run of titles in France; while in Spain, **Atletico Madrid** interrupted Barcelona and Real Madrid's dominance, winning their first title since 2014. Yet despite entering as league winners, all three of those sides are less fancied than their aforementioned compatriots.

Dependent...Lille will rely on Burak Yilmaz's goals

Inter will be less sure of themselves after the departure of the manager that guided them to Serie A glory, Antonio Conte. He's been replaced by former Lazio boss Simone Inzaghi who will have to do without last season's talisman, Romelu Lukaku. His replacement, Edin Dzeko, has enormous shoes to fill after arriving from Roma.

Repeating last season's domestic feat while also challenging in the Champions League will be a tough task for Lille; a task made even tougher by losing goalkeeper Mike Maignan to Milan and midfielder Boubakary Soumare to Leicester City.

Atletico, on the other hand, have bolstered their squad with the signing of Rodrigo De Paul from Udinese. The Argentina midfielder stood out at this summer's Copa America and should be a good fit for Diego Simone's style – one they hope will take them to a third final in nine years.

La Liga champions... Atletico coach Diego Simeone

UPSET POTENTIAL

The two-legged nature of the Champions League means surprise winners are rare, but upsets can still happen. There are a number of clubs who, on their day, can trouble Europe's best sides.

Porto were arguably the last side to cause a real upset when they won the tournament in 2004. They finished runners-up to **Sporting** in the Primeira Liga last season though, and the champions will join them in the group stage.

From the east of Germany, **RB Leipzig** are a tight-knit pressing unit that can fluster any opposition. That style is likely to remain under new coach Jesse Marsch and, despite the sale of key players, they are still capable of making their mark.

Fellow Bundesliga side **Borussia Dortmund** may be reeling similarly from the sale of Jadon Sancho but still have plenty of talent at their disposal. Their problem recently has been making the most of these players before they are sold, which is something they will be looking to remedy this season.

Sevilla enter the groups having finished fourth in La Liga and will look to progress to the knockouts as they did last season. That said, the six-time Europa League winners will not be too disappointed if they slip into that competition, as the 2022 final is being played at their Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan home.

Italian teams will be hoping to ride the wave of optimism after Italy's European Championship triumph, and there are few more optimistic and entertaining sides than Gian Piero Gasperini's **Atalanta**.

The remaining Serie A side in the mix, **Milan**, are the second-most successful team in the competition's history but have struggled recently. Their second-place finish in Serie A last season was their best since 2012, and some clever signings – including making Fikayo Tomori's loan deal from Chelsea permanent – means things could be looking up.

SOMETHING TO PROVE

Ajax and **Dynamo Kiev** are the biggest names from the teams not belonging to UEFA's top six leagues, and will be looking to show their array of homegrown talent can compete at this level.

Wolfsburg and **Villarreal** will be looking to prove they are not there just to make up the numbers – the latter finished seventh in La Liga and only qualified courtesy of their 2021 Europa League win.

Club Brugge (Belgium), **Zenit** (Russia) and **Besiktas** (Turkey) all won their respective leagues, and will be looking to prove the Champions League is indeed a league for champions.

20 breakout stars

Nick Bidwell **highlights the players who could make a name for themselves in this season's Champions League**

Rodrigo De Paul
(Atletico Madrid)

These past few weeks, the gods most definitely have been on the side of the outstanding 27-year-old Argentina midfielder who, besides featuring in his country's triumph at the 2021 Copa America, also celebrated the birth of his second child and competed a dream €35 million move from Udinese to Atletico.

After five strong seasons with Udinese, it was surprising that none of the big Italian teams made a concerted effort to bring him on board. Not that Atleti will be complaining; the Argentine should improve the Spanish champions from top to bottom in the engine room. He has the widest of skill-sets: creative, incisive in his passing, superb as a driving ball-carrier and full of energy and commitment. Just the sort of indefatigable all-rounder that Atletico coach Diego Simeone likes to go to war with.

De Paul will be on something of a revenge mission in the Spanish capital. In a previous spell in La Liga with Valencia (2014-2016), he was for the most part used as a substitute, a square peg in a round hole. Then-Valencia coach Gary Neville did not rate him at all and, early in 2016, sent him on loan to Racing Club, the Argentine side where he started out. It was during his time at Valencia that he had his only taste of the Champions League to date, appearing twice in the competition in 2015-16. This is his moment to step forward and show he belongs in exalted company.

Sebastiaan Bornauw
(Wolfsburg)

An off-season acquisition from Cologne, the combative Belgian stopper, 22, has gone from a Bundesliga relegation scrap to the Champions League in the blink of an eye. Ultra-confident and bristling with ambition, facing Europe's elite forwards will not faze him one bit.

Arnau Comas
(Barcelona)

A solid ever-present with Barcelona B last term, the fair-haired centre-back could well emerge as the heir apparent to Gerard Pique at the heart of the *Blaugrana* back-line. A calm, composed and very intelligent stopper with faultless positioning.

Boulaye Dia
(Villarreal)

The reigning Europa League holders won the race for the signature of the in-form Senegal striker, sealing a €15 million deal with Ligue 1 outfit Reims. The archetypal late-developer, he was playing for Jura Sud in the French fourth tier just three years ago.

Amad Diallo
(Manchester United)

Lightning quick, sharp, inventive and totally fearless, the Ivory Coast winger collected admiring glances aplenty in a sprinkling of first-team outings for the Red Devils in 2020-21. The role of impact substitute in Europe would suit him down to the ground.

Harvey Elliott
(Liverpool)

An impressive year on loan at Blackburn Rovers in the Championship, with seven goals and 11 assists, offered a glimpse of Elliott's exciting potential. A left-footed right-winger with exciting dribbling ability, the 18-year-old is likely to be understudy to Mo Salah.

Miguel Gutierrez
(Real Madrid)

Towards the end of last season, the 20-year-old left-back effortlessly made the transition from Real Madrid's youth ranks to the pro side. Attack-minded, technically gifted and plays with swagger and artistry. Could he be the long-term replacement for Marcelo?

Juanlu
(Sevilla)

Very promising 18-year-old right-winger, who twice had watching briefs in last season's Champions League campaign (versus Rennes and Krasnodar). Lightning quick, elusive and determined, he has also displayed his versatility by lining up at right-back on occasion.

Cyle Larin
(Besiktas)

The Canada striker – who shone at the 2021 CONCACAF Gold Cup – was an inspiration for Besiktas last term too, contributing 19 goals to their first Turkish League title in four years. Formerly with Orlando City in the US top flight and Belgian side Zulte Waregem.

Juan Musso
(Atalanta)

Not entirely satisfied with the goalkeeping revolving door they operated last term – with Pierluigi Gollini (now with Tottenham) and Marco Sportiello alternating – Atalanta have now opted for a clear hierarchy between the posts, with Musso, a €20 million purchase from Udinese, the undisputed first choice.

In matters of recruitment, Atalanta normally prefer to focus on youthful potential, heading off the beaten track to sniff out a bargain. But not in this instance, where the main criteria were experience and track record. Since joining Udinese three years ago from Racing Club in his Argentine homeland, Musso, 27, has established himself as one of Serie A's top custodians, tall and commanding, a fine shot-stopper, excellent in one-on-one situations and very consistent. Boasting 29 clean sheets in 104 appearances for Udinese, he is thought to have definitively caught the eye of Atalanta head-hunters while pulling off a couple of stunning saves in a 1-1 league draw with Udinese back in January.

Musso, the third-most expensive signing in Atalanta's history, was a non-playing member of Argentina's Copa America-winning squad this summer. He only has one full cap to his name – making his national team debut in a friendly against Morocco in March 2019 – and will be hoping that a first piece of the Champions League action with his new club will be the springboard for greater national team activity.

For most of his adolescence, basketball was actually his favourite sporting pursuit, only taking up goalkeeping at the relatively advanced age of 14.

Jonathan David
(Lille)

Still on cloud nine after sensationally breaking PSG's Ligue 1 stranglehold last spring, French champions Lille will be banking on the young Canada striker to build on his excellent work in the first six months of 2021.

David, snapped up by Lille from Belgian side Gent in the summer of 2020 for a club record €27 million, initially found the going tough in France, out of touch, a few pounds overweight and distinctly short of end-product. He did not manage one goal in his first dozen games with *Les Dogues* and inevitably found himself targeted by fans and critics alike. But as soon as his scoring drought ended in December, he suddenly came alive, racking up 12 goals and five assists as Lille claimed only their first league title in a decade.

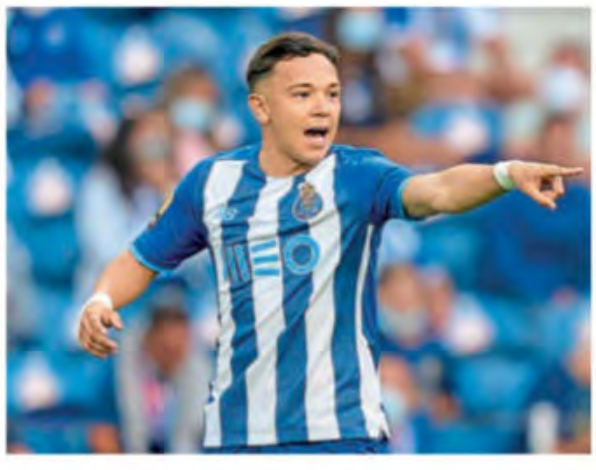
The 22-year-old, a Canuck international since September 2018, ended up giving full value for his transfer fee. According to statisticians, he was directly responsible for 20 of Lille's point-haul last term, and more than once he proved the team's saviour with late game-changing goals – the perfect example being the injury-time brace he netted in the 2-0 home win over Marseille in March.

> According to statisticians, he was directly responsible for 20 of Lille's [Ligue 1] point-haul last term

Born in the New York borough of Brooklyn to Haitian parents but raised in the Canadian capital Ottawa, he is renowned for his laid-back attitude. Indeed some Lille insiders claim he can be too relaxed for his own good. Let's look on the bright side: the Champions League will not disconcert him.

Nuno Mendes
(Sporting)

Teenage left-back or wing-back with the world at his dancing feet. Has a super engine, gets forward at every opportunity and often leaves markers for dead in one-on-one duels. Went to the Euros with Portugal in the summer and already has Premier League scouts on his case.



Pepe
(Porto)

The Dragons should not be short of guile and unpredictability now that they have signed the little Brazilian playmaker. A consummate dribbler, and complete contrast to his namesake at the club, he cost Porto €15 million from Gremio of Porto Alegre, his home for the past five years.

Omar Richards
(Bayern Munich)

It's rare for Bayern to go shopping in another country's second tier for their next talent, but that's what the Bavarians did this summer, enrolling the 23-year-old Reading left-back. Bayern particularly admire his distribution and ability to play under pressure.

Donyell Malen
(Borussia Dortmund)

The mouth-watering prospect of a regular diet of Champions League football would have been a key factor when the highly-promising Dutch attacker, 22, opted this summer to swap Eindhoven for what he hopes will be an uplifting five-year tour of duty in the heart of the Ruhr.

Malen has little experience in Europe's elite competition, only appearing fleetingly in one campaign in 2018-19. He scored against BATE in the play-offs to seal PSV's place in a group featuring Barcelona, Tottenham Hotspur and Internazionale. A move to Dortmund, who have qualified for the Champions League knockout stage in each of the past three years, gives him the opportunity to lift his career to a new, elevated plane.

Donyell, who bagged 19 Eredivisie goals for PSV last season, will undoubtedly feel that he has a point to prove with the *Schwarz-Gelben*. The recent European Championships were something of an anti-climax for him, starting just two of the Netherlands' four games and missing a gilt-edged chance in the shock round-of-16 defeat to the Czech Republic.

Dortmund, whose bill for his services should come to a hefty €34 million including add-ons, have never paid more for a player and they clearly believe he is worth the outlay. They love his extreme pace, comfort in high-tempo situations, flair for spectacular dribbling and the considerable goal threat he poses.

The Dutchman, whose formative years were spent in the Ajax and Arsenal academies, will have a vital part to play in the Dortmund reset. Last season's third-placed team have a hole to fill in their side after the departure of Jadon Sancho, and will hope that Malen can replace the England man's goals, assists and ability to conjure some magic with the ball at his feet.

Martin Satriano
(Internazionale)

Not so long ago, the management at Internazionale were finalising plans to send the 20-year-old Uruguayan front-man out on loan this season. Then came pre-season, with the youngster scoring for the Italian champions in industrial quantities. A No.9 with the awareness and touch of a playmaker.

Mohamed Simakan
(RB Leipzig)

Exceptional Marseille-born centre-back, who recently moved to Leipzig in a €15 million move from Strasbourg. Suffered a nasty knee injury in January, from which he has now fully recovered. A former French Under-20 international, he chose RB over Milan.

Xavi Simons
(Paris Saint-Germain)

Teenage Dutch midfielder who, in a year or two, could be a name on everyone's lips. Enticed out of the Barcelona nest two years ago, he is an amalgam of natural elegance on the ball, vision, speed off the mark and a willingness to mix it physically.

Matias Soule
(Juventus)

The 18-year-old Argentine is an absolute football natural, sublime in his close control and movement with a left foot to die for. Having joined Juve from Argentine club Velez Sarsfield in early 2020, he could be ready for first-team football after turning on the style in pre-season.

Jurrien Timber
(Ajax)

A young Dutch defender of considerable poise and maturity. Despite only one full season in the Ajax first-team, he was included in Netherlands' Euro 2020 squad, playing three games (one start and two off the bench). His twin brother Quinten also plays in the Eredivisie, at Utrecht.

Destination Seville

James Nalton takes a look at the contenders for this season's revamped Europa League...

Final host...Seville's Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium

It's the Europa League, but not quite as we know it. UEFA's secondary competition is now much more streamlined, with fewer sides taking part in qualifying and a group stage reduced from 48 teams to 32.

There will also be a brand-new preliminary knockout round featuring the runners-up from each group and the third-placed teams from the Champions League group stage.

Once those Champions League teams drop in, the dynamics of the Europa League can change, but for the past three years it has been won by a side who've participated in this tournament's group stage.

No recent winners are present as this season's edition kicks off, but defending champions Villarreal are one of the past winners who could feasibly drop from the Champions League into that preliminary knockout round.

Loan star...Guendouzi

FRENCH FANCIES

2018 finalists **Marseille** are present, though, and have already caught the eye with some impressive signings in pre-season. Wingers Konrad de la Fuente and Cengiz Under join from Barcelona and Roma respectively, while French duo William Saliba and Matteo Guendouzi arrive from Arsenal on loan. The main Marseille signing to look out for, though, might be 24-year-old midfielder Gerson, who won the Copa Libertadores with Flamengo in 2019. The Brazilian is looking to make a go of his second stint in Europe having previously spent a couple of seasons in Serie A with Roma and Fiorentina.

Their coach Jorge Sampaoli won the Copa Sudamericana – the South American equivalent of the Europa League – with Universidad de Chile in 2011 and, though his Marseille side are outsiders, this could be a big chance for the Argentine to finally make a similar impression in Europe.

After topping the Ligue 1 table for a few weeks in the middle of last season, **Lyon** eventually dropped down to fourth, missing out on the chance to qualify for Champions League football by finishing two points behind third-placed Monaco. The club have, somewhat un-popularly, sold homegrown talents Amine Gouiri and Melvin Bard to fellow Ligue 1 side Nice in recent seasons, but have high hopes for other academy products such as Rayan Cherki and Maxence Caqueret. Star player and last season's top scorer Memphis Depay also departed – to Barcelona – so *Les Gones* will be looking to Moussa Dembele and Cameroonian striker Karl Toko Ekambi to replace the Dutchman's attacking prowess.

EARLY FAVOURITES

Serie A side **Napoli** are favourites going into the tournament, but not overwhelmingly so. The main goal for their new manager, Luciano Spalletti, will be to mount a challenge in Serie A and at least restore the club's top-four status. Having participated in the Champions League in seven of the previous ten seasons, they are naturally one of the stronger sides in the field.

Fellow Italian side **Lazio** could also go far in the competition, especially after their appointment of Maurizio Sarri who is a previous winner with Chelsea. Sarri replaces Simone Inzaghi who left for Internazionale this summer.

Another club who have been handed a favourites tag by the bookmakers early on are **Leicester City**. In both of the last two seasons they have failed to hold on to a place in the Premier League's top four, and may well see victory in this competition as their best chance of qualifying for the Champions League.

The Europa League is a competition Brendan Rodgers and his players believe they have a genuine chance of winning, and the signings of Patson Daka and Boubakary Soumare from RB Salzburg and Lille respectively brings some useful continental know-how, as well as the depth to challenge on multiple fronts.

Former winner...Lazio coach Maurizio Sarri

ADDED INTEREST

The 2022 final will be played in Spain at the home of the most successful side in the history of the tournament, Sevilla.

With five Spanish sides in the Champions League group stage, there's a strong possibility one will drop into this competition, but until then La Liga will be represented by **Real Sociedad** and **Real Betis**.

The interest of Betis will be piqued by the fact that the final will be played in their city at the home of their local rivals, which could give them added impetus. They are managed by the experienced Chilean Manuel Pellegrini, who has guided the club back to the Europa League for the first time since 2018-19, when they lost to Rennes in a thrilling round of 32 clash that ended 6-4 on aggregate.

Real Sociedad's 2020 Copa del Rey win is still fresh in the memory, mainly because the final wasn't played until April 2021 due to the pandemic. Unique circumstances meant they held that title for just two weeks until Barcelona won the 2021 final. Their popular manager, Imanol Alguacil, who hails from the nearby town of Orio, made headlines after that cup win thanks to his authentic, fan-like celebrations, and his side will be hoping to take that spirit with them on their travels around Europe.

One to watch...Lyon's Rayan Cherki

Declan Rice...the England midfielder will be part of West Ham's first foray in Europe since 2006

West Ham United's rise to the Premier League's European qualification places was an unexpected but welcome surprise. David Moyes' side were good value for their sixth-place finish and were even in contention for a place in the Champions League at one point. Repeating such an achievement in the league while also competing in Europe will be a difficult ask, but fans will no doubt enjoy the trip.

Portuguese side **Braga** and **Lokomotiv Moscow** of Russia take their place in the tournament on the back of triumphs in their respective domestic cups.

Braga have appeared in the Europa League group stages in five of the past six seasons, reaching the knockout rounds four times. The 2011 runners-up are coached by Braga-born former Sheffield Wednesday and Swansea City manager Carlos Carvalhal, and their squad includes former Chelsea loan ranger Lucas Piazon.

Lokomotiv Moscow will be without Vedran Corluka, who retired to take up a post as Croatia assistant coach, but they've replaced him with another Croatian defender, 25-year-old Tin Jedvaj from Bayer Leverkusen.

BUNDESLIGA CONTENDERS

As one of two German representatives, **Bayer Leverkusen** will be hoping the sale of Leon Bailey to Aston Villa doesn't weaken them too much.

Players such as Moussa Diaby and Lucas Alario should keep them ticking over in attack, while 21-year-old attacker Paulinho has proved his fitness with Brazil at this summer's Olympics having spent last season on the sidelines with a knee injury.

They are joined by **Eintracht Frankfurt**, who will be looking to repeat their 2019 heroics when they narrowly lost in the semi-final to eventual winners Chelsea. The signings of Jesper Lindstrom from Brondby and Jens Petter Hauge from Milan should give them a good platform from which to build.

CONFERENCE ROOM

We know the Europa League can be shaken up with the introduction of Champions League sides in the knockout stage, but the 2021-22 season brings an added dimension with the introduction of a third European competition for the first time since the last Cup Winners' Cup in 1999.

Rather than exiting Europe altogether, teams finishing third in their Europa League groups will drop into a knockout round in the new Conference League.

This means more teams will be in continental competition for longer, and there is the potential to see new names etched onto European trophies.

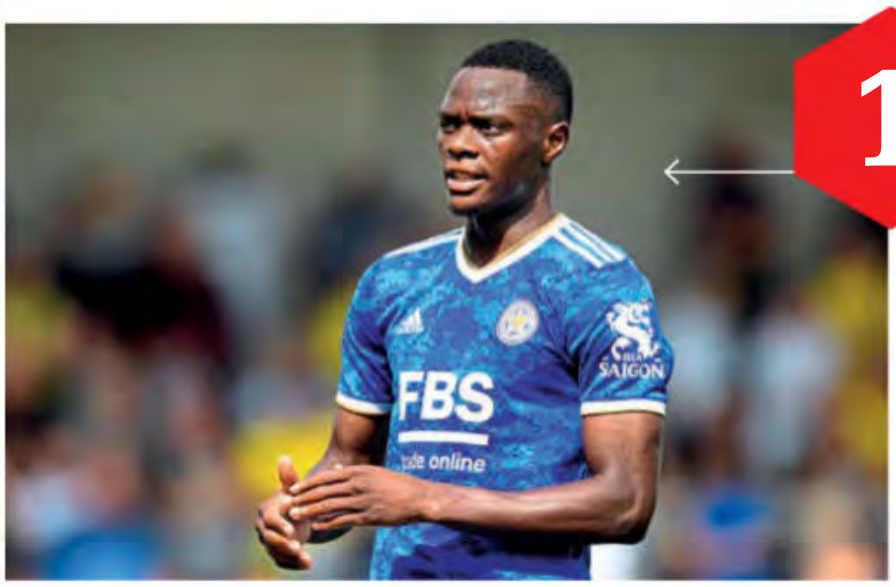
The Europa League's place and prominence in the new-look festival of European club football could be affected but, given the teams involved and those who could potentially pay a visit, it will still be an entertaining ride.

> **The interest of Betis will be piqued by the fact that the final will be played in their city at the home of their local rivals, which could give them added impetus**

Second chance...the Conference League

8 Europa League players to watch

Nick Bidwell picks out the stars that could light up this season's Europa League campaign



1 Patson DAKA

LEICESTER CITY

The much-lauded Zambia striker, recently-arrived from Salzburg, was absolutely correct when he once said that he had two distinct personalities: quiet, thoughtful and humble off the pitch, while breathing fire and brimstone in the heat of the battle. Still only 22, he is pacy, energetic, industrious and sharp in the red zone, as proven by the 34 goals he rattled home in all comps last season.

Cites Luis Suarez, Kylian Mbappe and new team-mate Jamie Vardy as his role models. Benefits from the advice of agent Frederic Kanoute, once a great African goal-getter himself.

2 Lucas PAQUETA

LYON

After a difficult 18 months with Milan, the versatile Brazilian attacking midfielder improved week on week with OL last term, supplying both the style and the numbers (nine goals and six assists in Ligue 1). Technically as smooth as silk, the former Flamengo star rounded off an excellent 12 months with a prominent role in Brazil's silver medal at the 2021 Copa America. New Lyon coach Peter Bosz has the conundrum of where to play him: as a deep director of manoeuvres, in box-to-box mode, in the No.10 slot or as an inverted winger.

3 Odilon KOSSOUNOU

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

Simon Rolfes, in charge of recruitment at Leverkusen, certainly pulled off a coup this summer in persuading the Ivory Coast centre-back to quit Belgian champions Club Brugge for the BayArena in a €23m deal. Kossonou, 20, reportedly had a long list of suitors, including the two Milan giants, Wolves, Arsenal, as well as Pep Guardiola at Manchester City. So hats off to Rolfes for getting to the front of the queue. Athletic, powerful and useful on the ball, the youngster is also able to perform to a good standard at right-back or as a holding midfielder.

Credit: Instagram @odilonkossounou

4 Adam MARUSIC

LAZIO

Last season, a campaign in which the *Biancocelesti* were chronically inconsistent, the 28-year-old Montenegrin was one of the few Sky Blues to never let his standards slip. Even more remarkable is that he produced the goods while on a positional tour of the field, operating as both a right and left wing-back, and in central defence. No wonder the Lazio management were quick to offer Marusic a new double-your-money deal. This will be his fifth season with Lazio following a €6.5m switch from Belgian outfit Oostende.

5 MURILO Cerqueira

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW

As the former Brazil Under-23 international proved with the Railwaymen in the Champions League last season (starting five of their six group-stage games), European competition definitely brings out the best in this watchful and tenacious central defender.

The 24-year-old produced a Man-of-the-Match performance in Lokomotiv's goalless draw at Atletico Madrid in November, often appearing to be the only barrier separating the Muscovites from a veritable drubbing.

Previously with top Brazilian side Cruzeiro before moving to the Russian captial in 2019, he could be on the move again soon if he continues his development.

6 Craig DAWSON

WEST HAM UNITED

In a development which virtually no one saw coming, the 31-year-old Watford loanee turned out to be one of the most effective centre-backs in the Premier League last term: an old-school stopper combining aerial dominance and the willingness to put his body on the line, as well as an impressive passing-range.

Totally committed to the Claret-and-Blue cause, he was rightly rewarded with a permanent two-year contract, and now forms the Hammers' first-choice centre-back pairing alongside Angelo Ogbonna.

7 Borja IGLESIAS

REAL BETIS

The Galician centre-forward could not stop scoring for the *Verdiblancos* in the second half of last season and will be suitably motivated this term, setting himself the double objective of at least 20 goals and a place in the Spain squad. Bought from Espanyol for €28m two years ago, he has spent part of this summer in an individual fitness programme in Madrid.

8 Ricardo HORTA

BRAGA

Pay no attention to his two indifferent campaigns in La Liga with Malaga (2014-16). For the last five years with Braga, he has been nothing less than a sensation, an impish and highly-skilled winger – happy on either flank – or second striker. Rejected as a youngster by Benfica, Horta, 26, was Braga's top scorer last term with 15 goals. Much admired by leading Bundesliga clubs.

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SAFE HANDS

Fresh from being named Euro 2020's Player of the Tournament, Gianluigi Donnarumma is ready to cement his reputation as the planet's best goalkeeper with new club Paris Saint-Germain…

Words: Nick Bidwell

ASD Club Napoli, a soccer school in the town of Castellammare di Stabia on the Bay of Naples, occupies a special place in the Italian football scene. And not just because local lad and penalty-kick stopper extraordinaire Gianluigi Donnarumma started out there on the road to worldwide renown and deserved acclamation as Euro 2020's Player of the Tournament.

Club Napoli, unremarkable in its facilities yet awash with know-how, ideas and ambition, is what Italian sportswriters justifiably term a *fabbrica dei portiere* – a goalkeeping factory.

Since the turn of the century, no fewer than five of its alumni have gone on to enjoy solid professional careers: Antonio Mirante, who, apart from featuring for Parma, Bologna and Roma, was also a back-up for the national team; former Napoli custodian Gennaro Iezzo; Alfonso De Lucia (ex-Parma, Monza and Livorno); Donnarumma's elder brother Antonio, a graduate of the Milan academy who later served as his sibling's understudy; and last but absolutely not least, Gianluigi himself, more commonly known as "Gigio".

"It's amazing that a town of 60,000 inhabitants has produced so many Serie A goalkeepers," declared Iezzo in an interview on a Neapolitan radio station back in 2015, the year Gigio made his top-flight bow for Milan at the incredibly tender age of 16 years and 242 days. "It's a fairy story that Gianluigi went in the space of two years from the Club Napoli academy to a Serie A spot with Milan.

"Of course, Donnarumma had the talent and the physical attributes. But like so many of us, he had the benefit of a great goalkeeping education. In Castellammare, they do a fantastic job with goalies. We all grew up at the school under one individual – Ernesto Ferraro, a real man of sport who dedicated himself to this task."

An institution in grassroots football in the Campania region of southern Italy, Ferraro was not merely an astute

Baby-faced... Donnarumma in action during his Serie A debut

talent-spotter. He was an outstanding instructor in the art of goalkeeping too, expertly covering all the technical bases while always making the process fun for his protégés. For him, it was a labour of love to pass on his almost-encyclopaedic knowledge to the likes of Donnarumma and company.

Ferraro did not take long to realise that he had a prodigy on his hands in the shape of Gianluigi, who was attending Club Napoli sessions even before he was old enough to go to school. Often left open-mouthed by Gigio's prowess, Ferraro felt compelled to let his family in on the secret.

"I remember Dad coming home one night and his eyes were blazing with joy," Ferraro's daughter told *La Repubblica* newspaper in the wake of Italy's European Championship triumph this summer. "Dad said to us: 'I've got a boy who is spectacular. You wouldn't believe what he can do between the posts. He's only seven, but I tell you now: he's going to play for Italy and make history.' We thought Dad was crazy. However, he was proved right."

> "I've got a boy who is spectacular. You wouldn't believe what he can do between the posts. He's only seven, but I tell you now: he's going to play for Italy and make history"
>
> Ernesto Ferraro, Donnarumma's first coach

Ferraro knew what he was talking about. One evening in September 2016 – aged just 17 years and 189 days – Donnarumma became the youngest-ever goalkeeper in the annals of the Italian national team, winning his first cap as a substitute in a 3-1 friendly defeat to France in Bari. Appropriately the player he replaced at half-time was Gianluigi Buffon, the previous record-holder, and the keeper that he looked up to more than any other.

Sadly Ferraro, who passed away in 2018, would not have the opportunity to see his star pupil make a major contribution to Italy's Euro 2020 triumph. But at least he was able to witness Donnarumma's precocious efforts in the early part of his career: his nerveless breakthrough on the

the emotional tribute he penned on Instagram: "Dear Mister Ernesto. If today, I've fulfilled my dream to play in Serie A and to tread the turf at the San Siro, I owe it above all to you. I learnt so much from you and not only how to act on the pitch. You spent your whole life teaching little players like me the love of this sport."

Donnarumma, who recently sealed a Bosman free transfer to Paris Saint-Germain following six years as a starter with Milan, is a 100 per cent football natural. Within the Donnarumma family unit the game was a religion, its influence all-pervasive and inescapable. His father Alfonso, a carpenter by trade, was soccer-mad, instilling his love of the Milan club to both his sons. His uncle Enrico, once a keeper with local club Juve Stabia, also played a key role in the indoctrination process, taking his nephew to Club Napoli at the age of just four and proffering all manner of tricks of the trade.

Brothers...Gigio and Antonio Donnarumma

Serie A stage; the Revelation of the Year award he picked up in 2016; his debut for the Italy Under-21s at the age of just 17; the first of his 33 caps for the *Azzurri*.

Understandably Gigio was heartbroken on hearing the sad news of Ferraro's death. Hence

Arch-rivals...Inter striker Eder clashes with Donnarumma during the keeper's first Milan derby

Timeline

JUL 30, 2015

Just a month after turning professional, Donnarumma plays his first game for Milan, coming off the bench in an International Champions Cup friendly match against Real Madrid in China. The game is decided by penalties, with Donnarumma one of two players to miss.

OCT 25, 2015

Makes his competitive debut in a 2-1 Serie A win v Sassuolo, becoming the second-youngest goalkeeper to start in Italian football history.

JAN 31, 2016

Appears in his first *Derby della Madonnina*, against Milan's arch-rivals Internazionale, helping his side to a comfortable 3–0 victory.

MAR 24, 2016

Makes his Italy U21 debut in a 4–1 win over the Republic of Ireland, becoming the youngest player ever to play for the team at 17 years and 28 days.

His elder brother Antonio, nine years his senior, was a fully paid-up member of the goalkeeping fraternity as well, good enough to be inducted into the Milan youth ranks, where he twice picked up national silverware at junior level. Keen to keep up the family tradition, the adolescent Gigio took mental notes and worked as hard as he could in practice sessions, preparing himself for the day when his turn would come.

Even in the earliest stages of his soccer evolution, Gigio had all the basics nailed down. He was athletic, had hair-trigger reactions, was by nature calm and composed, read the game well and crucially had the physique to fill the goal up. As a ten-year-old, he already measured a multi-storey 6ft 2in, so obtrusive in his appearance that parents of opposing players were quick to scream age-fraud. To ward off the foul-play jibes, his mother Maria learnt to always be on hand with the necessary date of birth papers.

By his early teens, Serie A scouts were beating a path to his door. Juventus and Roma were reported to be among the interested parties, though the most insistent of all were Internazionale, who had cultivated a good relationship with the Donnarumma family, invited him to Appiano Gentile (Inter's training ground) for a five-day trial and arranged a school for the youngster – then aged 14 – to attend. The affair looked in the bag.

Not so. Shortly after returning from his Inter try-out, Donnarumma would perform a stunning volte-face, signing for Milan in the summer of 2013. The cost? A cool €250,000. "Yes, Donnarumma was really close to a move to Inter, probably just a step away," revealed former Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani in 2019. "But Mauro Bianchessi (Milan's chief coach) pushed me to go for him. We went to the Donnarumma home and managed to prise him away from Inter."

This tug-of-war has encouraged the propagation of all kinds of urban myths. According to Club Napoli chairman Ciro Amore, Galliani was effectively persuaded to swoop by a cousin of super agent Mino Raiola, who has handled Gigio's affairs for the past six years. As for Giocondo Martorelli, Gianluigi's former agent, he swears that the youngster actually signed for Internazionale, only to change his mind within 24 hours and pledge himself to Milan.

> "He [Berlusconi] had two choices: he could either fire me and play [Diego] Lopez, or retain me and see Donnarumma as the starter. He kept me"
>
> Sinisa Mihajlovic, former Milan coach

Icon...Buffon and Donnarumma on international duty

AUG 21, 2016
Makes the first penalty save of his career, keeping out a stoppage-time effort from Torino's Andrea Belotti on the first day of the 2016-17 season.

SEP 1, 2016
Replaces Gianluigi Buffon at half-time to make his Italy debut against France, becoming his country's youngest-ever goalkeeper.

DEC 23, 2016
Lifts the first silverware of his career, saving Paulo Dybala's penalty in a 4-3 shootout victory over Juventus in the Italian Super Cup.

JUL 11, 2017
Signs a new contract with Milan until 2021, following plenty of speculation over his future at the club.

Player of the Tournament... UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin presents Donnarumma with his award

"I first got in touch with Inter's director of sport (Piero Ausilio) when Donnarumma was ten, and for the next three-and-a-half years Inter followed him very closely," declared Martorelli on Italian radio station *TMW* in 2017. "It was a long story, resulting in the signing of a contract. One afternoon, he, his mum and his dad concluded a written agreement with Inter. The next morning, he signed a deal with Milan. Without warning, without correctness."

To be fair to the youngster, wasn't he just following his heart? After all, he came from a family of Milan supporters and his brother Antonio had attended the same Milanello academy.

At Club Napoli, young Donnarumma always lined up in the more senior age categories and he continued in exactly the same vein in the Milan youth ranks, invariably competing with youngsters two or three years older than him. Milan knew full well they had a phenomenon in their midst and literally could not wait to blood him at senior level. Three days before his 16th birthday, in February 2015, he was given special dispensation by the Italian federation to sit on the first-team bench for a Serie A fixture against Cesena. Eight months later, he started his first game in the Italian top-flight, a 2-1 victory over Sassuolo.

Penalty hero...Bukayo Saka sees his decisive penalty saved by Donnarumma in the Euro 2020 final

JUL 27, 2017
Plays his first European game in a 1-0 Europa League third-round qualifier against Romanian side Universitatea Craiova.

NOV 13, 2017
Watches from the bench as Italy fail to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, losing 1-0 on aggregate to Sweden in the play-offs.

FEB 28, 2018
Saves two penalties in a 5-4 shootout victory over Lazio to take Milan into the Coppa Italia final, where they go on to lose 4-0 to Juventus.

SEP 7, 2018
Takes over as Italy's No.1 – following the international retirement of Gianluigi Buffon – by starting all four UEFA Nations League matches.

JUL 21, 2020
Wears the captain's armband for the first time, during his 200th game for Milan, in a 2-1 away Serie A victory over Sassuolo.

Immediately catching the eye with his composure, commanding presence and shot-stopping prowess, he swiftly made himself undroppable. Not bad at all for someone who had began the 2015-16 season behind Diego Lopez and Christian Abbiati in Milan's pecking-order. Milan's coach at the time, Sinisa Mihajlovic, says he was simply following his gut instincts, that he had watched young Donnarumma in training and was sure he was made of the right stuff.

"The week before I gave Donnarumma his big chance, [Milan owner] Silvio Berlusconi twice came to Milanello and put the case to me that Diego Lopez should be in goal for us," Mihajlovic told *Corriere della Sport* a few years ago. "I replied that he [Berlusconi] had two choices: he could either fire me and play Lopez, or retain me and see Donnarumma as the starter. He kept me."

While Mihajlovic would only last a further six months as Milan boss, Donnarumma would go from strength to strength at the San Siro. The *Rossoneri* back-line was infinitely more secure with him as the last line of defence and, in his six seasons as the club's No.1, he amassed the excellent quota of 88 clean sheets in 251 competitive games. "Sometimes it's been a curse to have been the one who gave Donnarumma his pro debut," laughed Mihajlovic during an interview on *Sky Sports Italia*. "Every time I've come up against him since [as coach of Torino and Bologna] he seems to pull off miracle saves. That said, I'm very happy for him."

Flying...Gigio was Italy's hero against Spain in the Euro 2020 semi-finals

Not that his time at Milan was always a gently-flowing river. A section of the *Rossoneri* faithful often voiced the opinion that Gianluigi's loyalty to the club was only skin-deep, that he was anything but committed to the idea of being a Milan standard-bearer. When, in the summer of 2017, he turned down a contract renewal offer of €5m net, many Milan fans responded with fury, accusing him of greed. Indeed, so toxic would the issue become, that during a European Under-21 Championship match a few days later, Italian supporters threw bundles of fake dollar bills into his goalmouth.

> A section of the *Rossoneri* faithful often voiced the opinion that [his] loyalty to the club was only skin-deep

He duly did re-sign. However, more controversy would follow, with Milan fans distinctly unimpressed with the club's decision to bring back Donnarumma's brother Antonio for a second spell at the *Rossoneri*. Convinced that the move was a sweetener in order to persuade Gigio to stay, many supporters became even more angry on hearing that Antonio, ostensibly the squad's No.3 custodian, would be earning a cool €1m a year. This development, plus reports in the press that Gianluigi felt

"It's time to leave"... Milan fans unfurl a banner directed at the Donnarumma brothers in 2017

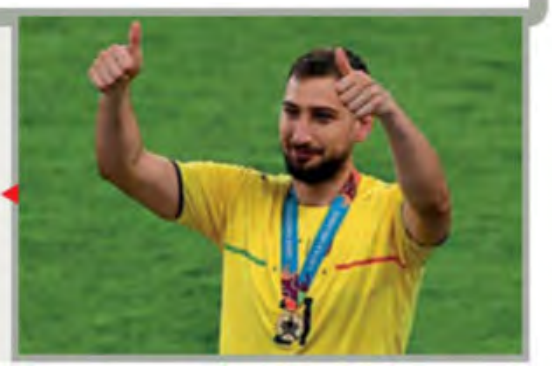
MAR 19, 2021
Named the 2019-20 Serie A Goalkeeper of the Year and included in the Team of the Year by the Italian Footballers' Association.

JUN 11, 2021
Plays his first game at a major tournament, starting in Italy's 3-0 victory over Turkey in Euro 2020's opening game at Rome's Stadio Olimpico.

JUN 16, 2021
Agrees a five-year deal with PSG, a month after Milan director Paolo Maldini confirms that the goalkeeper would be leaving the club.

JUL 6, 2021
In the Euro 2020 semi-final against Spain, he saves Alvaro Morata's spot-kick to help Italy to a 4-2 penalty shootout victory.

JUL 11, 2021
In the final against England, he saves two more penalties to win the Euros for Italy. Also becomes the first goalkeeper to be named Player of the Tournament.



"psychologically pressured" to stay put, had the San Siro terraces aflame. So much so that during an Italian Cup match versus Verona in December 2017, Milan supporters unfurled a banner attacking the Donnarumma brothers.

The words on the placard bristled with hate: "Psychological violence by giving you €6 million a season and signing your parasite brother? It's time to leave. Our patience with you is over." Little wonder Gianluigi was reduced to tears. Such is the life of the sportsman in the public eye: one day a hero, the next a villain.

Now, Gianluigi has finally left the *Rossoneri*, and can anyone truly blame him for wanting a new challenge elsewhere? The European Championship was the first trophy he has lifted since the 2016 Italian Super Cup – another final in which he was the penalty shootout hero. Remarkably, Donnarumma has not even played in the Champions League yet. The switch to PSG gives him the chance to fill that gaping hole in his CV.

Euro 2020 victory parade...Donnarumma (left) with Italy team-mates Lorenzo Insigne (centre) and Jorginho (right)

Gianluigi Donnarumma

the numbers game

ITALY

33

CAPS

CLEAN SHEETS

18

MILAN'S YOUNGEST PLAYERS

January 1985 **PAOLO MALDINI** 16/6/25	December 1979 **SERGIO BATTISTINI** 16/6/28
October 1942 **GIUSEPPE SACCHI** 16/7/17	October 2015 **GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA** 16/8/0

ITALY'S YOUNGEST PLAYERS

April 1911 **RODOLFO GAVINELLI** 16/3/8	May 1910 **RENZO DE VECCHI** 16/3/23
September 2016 **GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA** 17/6/7	July 1912 **LUIGI BARBESINO** 18/2/0

Years/Months/Days

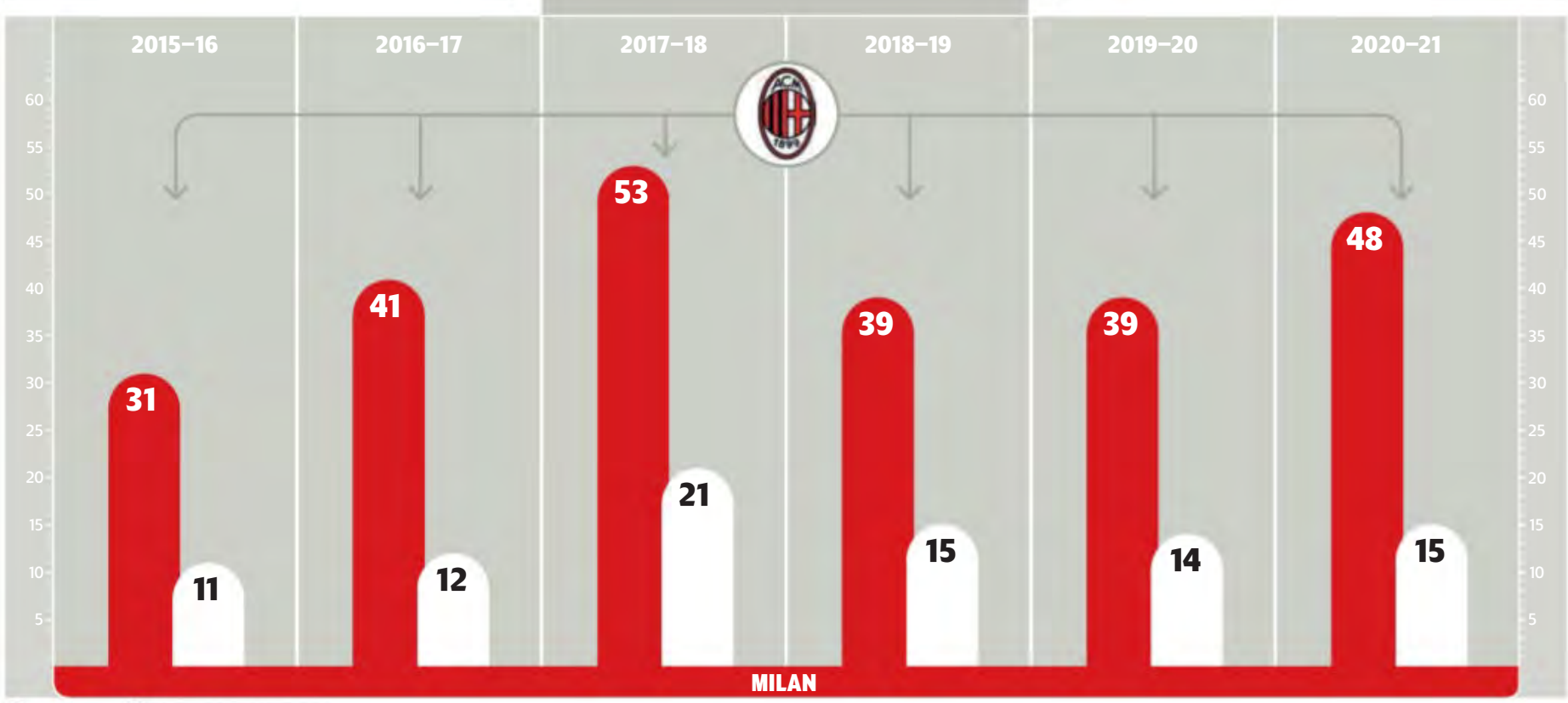
HONOURS

Team

- ITALIAN SUPER CUP 2016
- EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP 2020

Individual

- AIC SERIE A TEAM OF THE YEAR 2019-20
- SERIE A BEST GOALKEEPER 2020-21
- EUROS PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT 2020
- EUROS TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT 2020



GAMES CLEAN SHEETS

(Statistics correct as of 01/09/21)

30 eye-catching transfers

With the summer transfer window now closed, ***Jamie Evans*** examines the standout deals from around Europe…

JACK GREALISH

(Aston Villa to Manchester City)

1 To describe Grealish's huge £100 million transfer – the first British player to move for such a figure – as "eye-catching" would be something of an understatement.

It is a transfer that prompts so many questions about the player himself, his new manager, the club he has joined and the one he has left behind, plus how his status in the national team will be affected.

The most obvious query is why did Manchester City prioritise the former Aston Villa captain over other areas of the squad that needed strengthening, namely left-back and centre-forward? Is it an indulgence on Pep Guardiola's part, or does the Catalan coach believe that Grealish is capable of the kind of attacking numbers that Kevin De Bruyne, Raheem Sterling and Sergio Aguero have delivered in recent years?

How Pep deploys his new signing alongside Sterling, De Bruyne, Ferran Torres, Phil Foden and Riyad Mahrez is a mouth-watering prospect. The early signs are that he will be happy to trust Grealish in a midfield trio, and if he thrives there it will become increasingly difficult for Gareth Southgate to continue leaving him out of England's first XI.

And what of his former club? On paper, the Villans have invested their £100m smartly, with Leon Bailey, Emiliano Buendia and Danny Ings all arriving. Yet plenty of clubs have tried to replace a talisman with several new faces before and failed. How Dean Smith gets on with his new charges will be fascinating.

Debut... Grealish in Community Shield action

Free transfer... David Alaba

DAVID ALABA

(Bayern Munich to Real Madrid)

2 When Alaba agreed to join Real Madrid on a free transfer from Bayern Munich earlier this year, his versatility was cited as a key factor in the decision to sign him, with the Austrian able to play on the left or in the centre of both defence and midfield.

However, the summer departures of Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane have elevated his status to the most experienced Champions League centre-back in the squad. Injuries to Ferland Mendy and Marcelo meant that he started the first La Liga game of the season – a 4-1 victory at Alaves – at left-back, but he is likely to spend much of the campaign in the heart of the defence alongside the less experienced but hugely talented Eder Militao, while the versatile Nacho offers cover. It is potentially a title-winning combination.

New challenge...Tammy Abraham

TAMMY ABRAHAM

(Chelsea to Roma)

3 Chelsea have often been criticised for failing to utilise their academy, but this summer alone they have raised close to £100m with the sales of Abraham, Fikayo Tomori, Marc Guehi and Tino Livramento, effectively funding their signing of Romelu Lukaku.

Perhaps as a direct result of their experience with Lukaku – a player they first signed from Anderlecht in 2014 – Chelsea included a buy-back clause in the sale of Abraham: in 2023, they will be able to re-sign their academy graduate for £68m.

It is not difficult to imagine the clause being activated either. Abraham is a player that, when given chances, scores goals. Nobody has bagged more for Chelsea since the start of the 2019-20 season; last season he was frozen out to the extent that he wasn't even included on the 12-man bench for the Champions League final, yet still finished joint-top scorer with Timo Werner in 20 fewer games.

Jose Mourinho has shown great faith in the 23-year-old by making him his biggest signing at Roma. Can he deliver for the Portuguese manager?

Loanee... Zirkzee scored on his Belgian league debut

JOSHUA ZIRKZEE

(Bayern Munich to Anderlecht, loan)

4 The relegation of Bayern Munich's reserve team down to the regional leagues has prompted the German champions to send out a number of their youngsters on loan, including promising forward Fiete Arp, Manuel Neuer's understudy Alexander Nubel, defender Lars Mai, New Zealand playmaker Sarpreet Singh and holding midfielder Adrian Fein.

Yet the brightest spotlight will probably be placed on Zirkzee – a player that Bayern hope will one day replace Robert Lewandowski – who has joined Vincent Kompany's Anderlecht for a year.

The young Dutch striker made an explosive start to his Bundesliga career, coming off the bench to hit a vital late goal at Freiburg in December 2019, before doing exactly the same thing again three days later against Wolfsburg.

Last season his progress stalled. A January loan to Parma was halted by injury, but two goals in his first two games in Belgium suggests that this move may hold more promise.

Disciplined... Arnautovic was given a one-match ban for his outburst against North Macedonia

MARKO ARNAUTOVIC

(Shanghai Port to Bologna)

5 Which version of Arnautovic will the Serie A club see? The powerful striker that led the line for West Ham United, scoring seven goals in the first half of the 2018-19 season, or the petulant sulker that demanded a January move to China? The clinical finisher that sealed Austria's Euro 2020 victory over North Macedonia, or the hothead that celebrated by insulting their Albanian-heritage players?

The answer, of course, is all of the above.

Gone are the days where the 32-year-old Austrian commanded eight-figure fees, but his summer exploits proved that his two years in China haven't harmed his ability to compete in Europe. His first appearance for Bologna – scoring in a 5-4 Italian Cup defeat to Ternana – suggests that, whether the move is successful or not, it will be explosive.

THE REST

STEVEN BERGHUIS
(Feyenoord to Ajax)
One of the most controversial moves in Eredivisie history, with Berghuis becoming only the fourth player to move directly from Feyenoord to Ajax.

MYRON BOADU
(AZ to Monaco)
Widely touted as one of Europe's most promising young strikers, having scored 32 Eredivisie goals before his 21st birthday.

BRIAN BROBBEY
(Ajax to RB Leipzig)
Ajax were forced to admit defeat in their attempts to tie the teenage striker down to a new deal in February. Leipzig have a proven eye for recruiting young talent.

CLAUDINHO
(Red Bull Bragantino to Zenit)
After topping the 2020 scoring charts in Brazil, the attacking midfielder was expected to join one of Bragantino's Red Bull sister clubs in Leipzig or Salzburg, but chose Russians Zenit instead.

ANDREAS CORNELIUS
(Atalanta to Trabzonspor)
Two years after Alexander Sorloth scored 33 goals for them, Trabzonspor have signed another 6ft 5in Scandinavian striker that flopped in the Premier League. Ex-Cardiff City man Cornelius will hope to have a similar impact.

KONRAD DE LA FUENTE
(Barcelona to Marseille)
La Masia graduate De La Fuente may have had a future at the Nou Camp were it not for the financial crisis at the club. The USA winger has joined a thrilling project at Marseille, joining Dimitri Payet and Cengiz Under in attack.

MERIH DEMIRAL
(Juventus to Atalanta, loan)
As a club that asks its centre-backs to defend aggressively, Atalanta may prove to be a better fit for Demiral than Juventus, where the Turk failed to establish himself.

Returning... Lukaku is back at his favourite club

DENZEL DUMFRIES
(PSV to Internazionale)
Replacing Achraf Hakimi with Dumfries with a healthy €47.5m profit may prove to be the smartest deal of the summer. The Dutchman proved at Euro 2020 that he can provide just as much attacking thrust from right wing-back.

EDIN DZEKO
(Roma to Internazionale)
Replacing Romelu Lukaku will be a much greater challenge for Inter. The 35-year-old Dzeko will have to roll back the years significantly to match the 24 Serie A goals the Belgian scored last season.

BRYAN GIL
(Sevilla to Tottenham Hotspur)
Starred on loan at Eibar last season, lighting up the league with dazzling wing performances. Aged 20, he already has three Spain caps and went to the Tokyo Olympics.

MARC GUEHI
(Chelsea to Crystal Palace)
A star of the England Under-17 side that won the 2017 World Cup, Guehi has developed into a commanding defender. Could form a combative pairing alongside Joachim Andersen.

Exciting... De La Fuente has impressed so far

JENS PETTER HAUGE
(Milan to Eintracht Frankfurt, loan)
Signed by Milan after helping Bodø/Glimt to the 2020 Norwegian title, it didn't quite happen in Serie A for the 21-year-old. Scoring on his Bundesliga debut suggests Germany may be a better fit for the attacker.

MATHEUS HENRIQUE
(Gremio to Sassuolo, loan)
Described by Tim Vickery as "a busy central midfielder in a similar mould to Juventus' Arthur", Henrique joins Sassuolo on loan after winning gold for Brazil in Tokyo. Serie A giants will keep an eye on his progress.

ERIK LAMELA
(Tottenham Hotspur to Sevilla)
The Argentine was part of the deal that took Bryan Gil to North London. It is a deal that seems to suit everyone after Lamela scored twice on his La Liga debut.

ROMELU LUKAKU
(Internazionale to Chelsea)
Lukaku's return to Stamford Bridge completes a front-line that looks simply terrifying. The Belgian's physical attributes are well-known, but his link-up play will also help bring the best out of Timo Werner, Kai Havertz, Hakim Ziyech, Mason Mount and Christian Pulisic – depending on who starts alongside him. A boyhood Chelsea fan, he is desperate to make his second spell at Stamford Bridge a success.

JOAO MARIO
(Internazionale to Benfica)
Another controversial summer move and, potentially, the most controversial in Portuguese football history. Won the title on loan with Sporting last season, but opted to join their massive arch-rivals after leaving the Italian champions.

GONZALO MONTIEL
(River Plate to Sevilla)
An overdue move to Europe for the 24-year-old right-back, who played a vital role in River's 2019 Copa Libertadores victory and started for Argentina in the Copa America final.

LUKAS NMECHA
(Manchester City to Wolfsburg)
Wolfsburg swooped for Nmecha after he scored 18 goals on loan at Anderlecht. The ex-England U21 striker will hope to impress Hansi Flick after switching international allegiance to Germany in 2019.

AMADOU ONANA
(Hamburg to Lille)
Lille moved quickly to replace Boubakary Soumare, who played a vital role in last season's title win. Onana only turned 20 in August, and impressed in Germany's second tier last year. Eligible to represent Senegal or Belgium.

FRANK ONYEKA
(Midtjylland to Brentford)
The Nigeria midfielder is the latest – and most expensive – player to move between two clubs with the same owner. Onyeka started all of Midtjylland's Champions League games last season and impressed on his debut against Arsenal.

TIMOTHEE PEMBELE
(PSG to Bordeaux, loan)
The teenage defender was one of the youngest players at the Tokyo Olympics. Showed promise in nine appearances for PSG last season, and scored on his Bordeaux debut against Marseille in August.

DARIO SARMIENTO
(Manchester City to Girona, loan)
The Argentine 18-year-old winger only played 18 league games for Estudianes, but City saw enough to sign him before sending him straight to their sister-club in the Spanish second tier.

ANDRE SILVA
(Eintracht Frankfurt to RB Leipzig)
With 28 goals in 32 Bundesliga games last year, Silva is showing why Milan paid Porto €38m for him in 2017 after he scored five Champions League goals aged 21.

KAMALDEEN SULEMANA
(Nordsjaelland to Rennes)
The latest graduate from the Right To Dream Academy, which produced Denmark's Mikkel Damsgaard and Mohammed Kudus. Marked his €15m move by scoring on his Ligue 1 debut.

CHRISTOS TZOLIS
(PAOK to Norwich City)
The Canaries have been far more ambitious in this window than they were on their previous Premier League campaign. Greek teenager Tzolis edges out Kosovo forward Milot Rashica, United States striker Josh Sargent and Scotland midfielder Billy Gilmour as their most exciting recruit.

Der Bomber

Keir Radnedge reflects on the career of Germany and Bayern Munich's goalscoring legend, Gerd Muller

Gerd Muller was a one-off. He was Germany's greatest goalscorer and one of the legends that effectively created the modern Bayern Munich. Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, one-time team-mate then later friend and CEO, described him as: "a specialist goalscorer whose role does not even exist in today's football."

Muller's death at 75 had been reluctantly and sorrowfully awaited ever since October 2015 when Bayern confirmed he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. In fact Muller had been diagnosed initially in 2011 and was living out his last memory-numbed years in a nursing home.

The rate at which Muller scored goals was truly mind-boggling, and some of his records will stand for years.

Between 1964 and 1979, Muller scored 566 goals in 607 matches for Bayern, including 365 in 427 Bundesliga appearances. Together club and star striker celebrated 13 national and international club trophies, and Muller also shared in West Germany's triumphant European Championship and World Cup double in 1972 and 1974.

His record of 40 goals in a Bundesliga season – scored in 1971-72 – stood for 49 years before it was broken by Robert Lewandowski in May. He held the record for the most goals in a calendar year, with 85 in 1972, until Lionel Messi surpassed him in 2012.

Nobody has scored more goals in the Bundesliga (365) or German Cup (78). No German has more in UEFA club competitions (62), while only eight others have scored more; all of them having played at least 40 more games than Muller. His average of 0.87 goals per game is better than both Lionel Messi (0.8) and Cristiano Ronaldo (0.74) at the top of the pile.

Until 2014, Muller was also the national team's record marksman with 68 goals in an incredible 62 caps. It is a record that is even more impressive with friendly matches taken out, with 39 goals in 31 competitive games. Miroslav Klose, who overtook Muller, needed almost three times as many games (171) to reach 71. Klose was the first to acknowledge his admiration for Muller and the chasm between their goal-grabbing ratios.

Muller's last formal public appearance was a gala in his honour in Hamburg in 2013. The address was delivered by Franz Beckenbauer, his room-mate during their time together ▸

World Cup winner... Muller scores West Germany's second goal v Netherlands

at Bayern as young, world-conquering footballers in the 1970s.

Born on November 3, 1945, Muller began with local club TSV Nordlingen and signed for Bayern in 1964 after scoring 47 goals in 28 games. General manager Walter Fembeck fought off competition from TSV 1860 Munich to sign him, reaching Muller's family home just half an hour before his opposite number.

Coach Zlatko "Tschik" Cajkovski was less impressed upon meeting his new, young, tubby centre-forward at pre-season training, complaining to president Wilhelm Neudecker: "I'm not putting that little elephant in among my string of thoroughbreds."

Sepp Maier agreed: "He was well fed," the former goalkeeper once said. "His thighs were the width of other people's waist. The way he looked, I thought he wouldn't last long with us."

But a presidential order was an order, and Cajkovski duly selected the new signing. Bayern never looked back.

The club that Muller joined could not have been more different to the all-conquering Bayern side of today. They had just one league championship to their name, won over 30 years earlier, and were yet to play in the newly-formed Bundesliga. Yet within three years, Muller's goals had shot them out of the regional league (south) and on to Cup Winners' Cup glory.

He was an antithesis of the archetypal big, strong centre-forward; quite the reverse. Muller was short, stocky and muscular, but a low centre of gravity gave him the edge in balance and alacrity over opposing defenders who towered head and shoulders over him at corners and free-kicks. They were still tumbling back down to earth when Muller was already stabbing the ball into the net.

"Without Gerd, we would never have had that success," said Beckenbauer earlier this year. "He scored the goals and had the mentality that took us forward. He wasn't the best player but he was the most important. Gerd was the MVP."

Muller's haul of 68 international goals included four in a match on four occasions, despite playing at the height of football's most defensive era. His 566 goals for Bayern brought silverware jingling. They won the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1967 then the European Cup in 1974 – when he struck twice in the replayed final against Atletico Madrid – as well as in 1975 and 1976.

In 1976 Bayern followed up with the world club crown, defeating South American champions Cruzeiro 2-0 at home and drawing 0-0 in Brazil. Muller opened the scoring in Munich.

For all that his goalscoring record was phenomenal, Muller was criminally underrated as a footballer. Rarely did he have a chance to display a full range of his abilities. Opponents consistently misjudged his all-round gifts. Among those caught out were Leeds United in the 1975 European Cup final in Paris. Muller had to drop back into the midfield because of an injury-enforced reshuffle early in the match. This time, he led Bayern by both scheming and scoring, pulling the strings in midfield before converting a cross to seal a 2-0 victory in the 81st minute.

Fans with long memories claim it was only Muller's injury absence in the spring of 1977 that prevented Bayern making it four European Cups in a row.

Muller was West Germany's Player of

the Year in 1967 and 1969 and then European Footballer of the Year in 1970. It was no contest. He had top-scored at the World Cup in Mexico with ten goals, including the close-range, extra-time volley that beat England so dramatically in the quarter-finals.

"He is my scorer of 'little' goals," said Helmut Schon, manager of the West German side who achieved the coveted European and world double. *Der Bomber* scored twice in the 3-0 defeat of the Soviet Union in the 1972 European Championship final, then the winner against the Netherlands in the 1974 World Cup decider on Muller's home turf in Munich.

Schon understood well that Muller's specific talent lay in finishing off moves from close range in and around the six-yard box. He was all about rapid anticipation and split-second explosion. His winner against the Dutch was the finest and most important example of a "little" goal.

The teams were locked at 1-1 with two minutes remaining in the first half when Rainer Bonhof escaped down the German right wing. Muller, apparently off balance at the near post, had to swivel on Bonhof's short cross and shoot all in one movement. His acute sense of goal was all it took to jab the ball beyond keeper Jan Jongbloed for what proved the winner.

In fact, Muller should have been credited with a second goal after the interval. He accelerated clear of the Dutch defence to beat Jongbloed again, only to be flagged offside.

Referee Jack Taylor and his linesman, deceived by Muller's quickness of thought and action, duly disallowed the "goal". Even Muller's team-mates accepted the decision, raising not one whisper of protest. Yet slow-motion reruns prove that Muller was safely onside when the pass was hit.

"I was content I'd made the right decision," said Taylor years later. "Muller was yards clear of the last defender. But when I saw the slow-motion rerun I saw I'd been wrong. Muller had been too quick for his own good!"

Muller retired from the national team after the World Cup triumph but played on with Bayern until early 1979. Then, disaffected with the game in general and upset at being substituted by coach Pal Csernai in a defeat at Eintracht Frankfurt, he decided to quit altogether. Muller's last goal for Bayern was in a 2-1 defeat by Kaiserslautern on November 18, 1978; his last game was a 4-0 win over Borussia Dortmund on February 10, 1979.

Enduring rancour over his abrupt exit meant it was not until September 20, 1983, that he was honoured with a "farewell match" between Bayern and the West German national team in the Munich Olympic Stadium.

The late 1970s were the high days of the razzmatazz that was the doomed North American Soccer League. Beckenbauer had left for New York Cosmos in 1977. Muller always insisted he would never go and anyway, he spoke no English. But the money was too good to turn down. Muller scored 40 goals in three seasons for Fort Lauderdale Strikers and poured his earnings into a steakhouse.

> "Without Gerd, we would never have had that success…he wasn't the best player but he was the most important. Gerd was the MVP"
>
> Franz Beckenbauer, Muller's team-mate and room-mate

The investment turned sour. Fading glory and boredom sent Muller spiralling into depression and alcoholism. He spent too much time drinking with holidaying fans and not enough time on the business. Later he said: "I did not realise what was happening, I just did not know. Then, they came along and saved me from it."

"They" were Muller's old team-mates, Beckenbauer and Uli Hoeness, by now Bayern president and general manager respectively. They were shocked by the Muller they found in Florida, brought him back to Munich, supported him through a brutal treatment regime then put him to work, coaching the youngsters. Later he would admit: "Overcoming my addiction to alcohol was my greatest victory, even more important than winning the World Cup."

Tributes on Muller's death were appropriately generous.

Bayern president Herbert Hainer, the former adidas boss, hailed "the greatest striker there has ever been – and a fine person, a personality in world football. Without Gerd Muller, FC Bayern would not be the club we all love today. His name and the memory of him will live on forever."

Oliver Kahn, who recently succeeded Rummenigge as CEO, said: "He has been one of the greatest legends in the history of FC Bayern. His achievements are unrivalled. As a player and a person, Gerd Muller stands for FC Bayern and its development into one of the biggest clubs in the world like no other. Gerd will forever be in our hearts."

Muller, who was awarded FIFA's Order of Merit for services to the game in 1998, is survived by wife Uschi and daughter Nicole.

German champions… Muller holds aloft Bayern's second Bundesliga trophy

Room-mates…Beckenbauer and Muller at New York Cosmos and Fort Lauderdale Strikers in 1980

SEAMUS COLEMAN

"I want to win a trophy at the club and I will keep trying to do that until I've kicked my last ball"

The Everton skipper discusses life at Goodison Park under new manager Rafael Benitez

Words & Interview by Kevin Palmer

Many Everton supporters may never accept Rafael Benitez as manager of their club, but Toffees captain Seamus Coleman believes the former Liverpool boss can win the popular vote among the Goodison Park faithful if he ends their long wait for a trophy.

Few managerial coronations have divided a fan base like the appointment of Benitez at Everton in June, with the former Liverpool manager – who infamously dismissed his latest employer as a "small club" back in 2007 – facing an uphill battle to win over his critics.

Yet Coleman believes all with a blue pulse need to unite behind the latest incumbent of the Everton hot seat.

"The appointment of a former Liverpool manager was never going to go down so well with some Everton fans, but we all have to take a step back now and get behind him, which I'm sure our supporters will do," said the Republic of Ireland international.

"At the end of the day, we all want success and Rafael Benitez has had success in his career. He has won the biggest trophies in the game, won in different countries and I know the fans will get behind us this season because we all want the same thing – success.

"He had a great time at Valencia, he won stuff at Chelsea, we know he won stuff at Liverpool. He did well with Newcastle and won a cup with Napoli. So he's a successful manager and I think as a club we've got to get behind this. We all want the same thing.

"Like anything in football, it's all about results and I'm sure the manager will get some good results for us and we can all move forward from the talk of the summer and what his previous ties were as well.

"We've all got to get fully behind the new manager and try first and foremost to impress him and get into his plans and try to be successful for Everton Football Club, because that's what we all want. That's what the board want, that's what the players want, that's what the manager will want and it's what the fans will want."

Benitez is the seventh manager Coleman has worked under during his time as an Everton first-team performer and he admits that is too many for a club with their eyes on trophy success.

"What's disappointing for me is we've had so many managers during my time at the club," continued Coleman.

"Ultimately, that's a reflection on the players – I don't think that's just a reflection on the manager. Personally, I've been a part of the first team for 12 years, so it's also a reflection on me.

"We are crying out for that success and we've not got that recipe right yet for whatever reason. I do believe that the club will win a trophy very soon. I don't know how soon but that's what we are all looking for.

"We're going into a new stadium very soon, we've got the financial backing now we didn't have many years ago and we have a manager in place who has a track record of success, so let's be positive.

"It's not like everything needs to be ripped up now and go again. But I do know every manager is different and he'll want to put his own stamp on things as quickly as possible and bring his own style and philosophy."

Coleman's commitment to the Everton cause was highlighted by the new contract he signed ahead of the start of the season, keeping the 32-year-old at the club until 2023. Providing he avoids injuries, he should go on to overtake Tim Howard's Premier League appearance record for the Toffees, having made his debut in 2009 in a side managed by David Moyes and featuring Marouane Fellaini and Tim Cahill. Yet he still lacks the one piece of gold he craves.

"To be honest, if I get to the end of my career and I haven't won a trophy with

Everton, I will feel like I've not achieved what I wanted to," he conceded.

"When I went to Everton, the first aim was to break into the first team and I had little goals along the way, but then you really fall for the club and understand what the club means, you want to be part of that history of winning.

"You see the videos and the images of Everton players lifting trophies in the 1980s and you understand how big the football club is.

"When some players sign for Everton, they don't realise how big the football club is and how successful it was. Yes, those trophy wins were a long time ago, but this is a big club.

"So if I get to the end of my career with this football club and I haven't won anything, I will look back on it with regret.

"I don't want to be remembered as an Everton player who has played 300 or 400 games for the club and everyone says it's a great achievement, well done.

"I want to win a trophy at the club and I will keep trying to do that until I've kicked my last ball at the club."

At the age of 32, life after football will soon be a subject on Coleman's agenda and, while management and coaching could be part of his future, a step back into a quiet life back home in Ireland with his three children and wife Rachel may appeal.

"I see a lot of players saying life after football can be a scary thought, but it doesn't frighten me at all," he added.

"My life has always been focused on family and football and when the second one of those goes, I won't need the daily acknowledgment from people or the applause of the fans. I don't need that in my life. I'm not going to miss the feeling of being a footballer. It won't leave a void in my life.

"Will I go into management? I don't know. I've worked under a lot of great managers, all very different in the way they do things and you learn something from each one of them. If I went into coaching and management, I'd take what I have seen from them with me into that job, soak up all the information each one brings and try to blend it all together for when you become a coach or a manager.

"I'm doing my coaching badges at the moment and I have enjoyed working on them, but I could easily disappear back to Donegal with the family and not have too much to do with football.

"I will miss this job, don't get me wrong, I love it. That love for football has never faded for me through the years. I go in every day and I love it, I'm grateful that I am able to work in this profession and I love working hard in training every day, but there is more to life than football and when my time is up, I'll accept it and do whatever is next in my life."

Seamus Coleman was speaking to World Soccer as he launched SPAR's Better Choices summer 2021 campaign

Glenn Moore

Canada take gold

Sweden secure silver after penalty shootout defeat, while a bronze medal for the USA prompts an inquest for the world champions

They had risen from their beds in their millions, bleary-eyed but hopeful. When the gold medal match at the Tokyo Olympics kicked off, it was 5am in Vancouver, 6am in Edmonton and 8am in Toronto. Nearly three hours later – with a lot of strong coffee consumed, probably a few early beers, too – there were 4.4 million Canadians watching as Julia Grosso stood, trying to calm her nerves, just inside the penalty area.

The 20-year-old was about to take the 12th shot of a penalty shootout. With only four previously converted, the score was Sweden 2, Canada 2. Grosso shot left-footed to the right of Hedvig Lindahl. The veteran goalkeeper got a strong hand to the ball but could not keep it out. After successive bronze medals, Canada had finally won Olympic gold.

Their maiden major honour tasted all the sweeter for having despatched the United States in the semi-final. The first victory over their neighbours in 20 years did not just slay a nemesis, it avenged the bitterly controversial semi-final defeat at Old Trafford at the same stage of the 2012 Games.

The question now is whether Canada can build on this triumph and establish a domestic professional foothold; at present Canadian women have to leave to forge a career. Of the 22-woman Olympic squad, nine play south of the border in the NWSL, five in England's WSL (Deanne Rose joined Reading from Florida Gators during the tournament), four in France, one in Sweden, and three in the US college system – including Grosso who plays for the Texas Longhorns.

The Canadian men, far less successful internationally, have a fledgling eight-team domestic league and three franchises in the US-based Major League Soccer.

"It's now or never," said Christine Sinclair after capping an illustrious career with gold. The 38-year-old, the leading scorer in international football of either gender, added: "I've been on the podium twice before and nothing changed. If a gold medal doesn't change some things in our country, nothing's going to. My plea is for Canada to fully support this team. It's time we get a professional league or some professional teams."

The former seems unlikely. Lisa Baird, NWSL commissioner, admitted in August that the nine-year-old league is still loss-making, in spite of a third of the players being paid the league minimum $22,000 [£16,000]. Given how successful the US team has been for decades it is hard to envisage the much smaller Canadian market being ready to support a league system off the back of one gold medal.

More probable is entering a team or two into NWSL. Baird added: "I've heard from fans in Vancouver, Toronto and other places say that they'd love to have a team, and it's certainly something we will seriously consider as we finalise our expansion plans."

NWSL will expand to 12 teams next year and is aiming for 14 in the near future. Nick Bontis, president of Canada Soccer, said last year: "I'll work my butt off to get an NWSL team in Canada," and he reiterated his commitment in the wake of Tokyo.

Winners...Canada players celebrate after Julia Grosso's winning penalty

"It just takes some wealthy individuals in Canada willing to invest in women's sports and women's soccer," added Sinclair. Easy to ask for, less easy to commit to, but those 4.4m viewers should have made a few investors ponder the possibilities.

Back below the border, the fall-out was more of an inquest than a celebration of the bronze medal that the US team ultimately won. The reigning world champions, unbeaten since January 2019, were heavily fancied. But they were a shadow of their usual dominant selves and fortunate to make the semi-finals.

Questions were asked of Vlatko Andonovski, in his first test as coach, but Megan Rapinoe put the onus closer to home: "I just think the players have a lot to look at ourselves about," she said. "We need to perform better, period. We can deep-dive into analysing...but it's just getting it done from players, from all of us."

The US were well beaten in their opening match by a Swedish side that were the tournament's outstanding team, winning all five matches en route to the final. There, however, they met the best-organised team. Even with the kick-off moved to 9pm (it was originally scheduled, due to US TV demands, for the steaming heat and humidity of the middle of the day) they could only

Dejected...Megan Rapinoe after the United States' semi-final defeat

Heartbreak...beaten finalists Sweden were the tournament's outstanding team

break Canada down once. But Stina Blackstenius' fifth goal of the Games was cancelled out by Jessie Fleming's penalty.

In the shootout, faced with the jack-in-a-box antics of goalkeeper Stephanie Labbe, their nerve failed. Cruelly, the captain Caroline Seger, a giant of the game in Sweden, had the chance to win gold with their fifth spot-kick, but shot over.

Canada only won two matches without recourse to a shootout, and only scored six goals, but conceded just four with their defence outstanding. Their performance was a triumph for new coach Bev Priestman, who took over in October 2020 after two years as assistant to England's Phil Neville.

A former coach of the Canadian U17 and U20 teams, Priestman knew her youthful squad well. However, the Englishwoman would not have taken the job had the Football Association opted to promote her when Neville quit. The FA instead poached the Dutch Euro 2017 winner Sarina Wiegman. It seemed a coup at the time, but there will now be added pressure on Wiegman at next summer's home-hosted Euros to prove the FA were right.

Having drawn with Canada, despite fielding an understrength team, an English-dominated Team GB may feel the Olympics were also a missed opportunity. Despite limited preparation Team GB had looked good, defeating Chile and Japan to qualify ahead of the Canada match. They then led Australia 2-1 with two minutes remaining in the quarter-final. But despite Hege Riise's side defending in growing numbers they somehow left Sam Kerr with space and time in the box, and suffered the inevitable consequence.

Kerr struck again as Australia won 4-3. Team GB were left with the memory of outstanding performances from the evergreen Scot Kim Little, tyro winger Lauren Hemp, and the clinical Ellen White, who scored six goals in four games including a hat-trick against Australia.

> "If a gold medal doesn't change some things in our country, nothing's going to...it's time we get a professional league or some professional teams"
>
> Canada captain Christine Sinclair

Australia went on to a narrow defeat against Sweden in the semi-finals but left full of hope for the 2023 Women's World Cup which they co-host with New Zealand – whose team did respectably given their minimal preparation.

Except for the matches involving the eventual winners, it was a tournament of goals, notably for the Netherlands who defeated Zambia 10-3 and China 8-2, and drew 3-3 with Brazil and 2-2 with the US. Vivianne Miedema scored ten, but was one of two Dutch players to miss as they lost the quarter-final penalty shootout to the US. However, the key moment was Alyssa Naeher saving Lieke Martens' spot-kick at 2-2 with nine minutes left of the regular 90.

Zambia's Barbra Banda had a remarkable tournament with hat-tricks against the Netherlands and China, where she plays in Shanghai. Wang Shuang scored four in the latter tie but the 4-4 draw effectively eliminated a disappointing Chinese team.

Of the South Americans, Brazil looked potent in the group stage but were another team suffocated by Canada, losing the quarter-final on penalties, while Chile made a creditable debut with a trio of narrow defeats.

Hosts Japan were underwhelming. The absence of fans (only Rifu of the six venues allowed spectators, and that capped at a few thousand) affected them and they only won one of their four matches. It was, however, an achievement to put on the football tournament given the constraints of the pandemic. With a wider geographical spread than any other Olympic event the risk of COVID-19 was significant, but fortunately the only infectious outbreak was football fever in Canada.

Canada legend... Christine Sinclair

Top scorer... Netherlands' Vivianne Miedema hit ten goals

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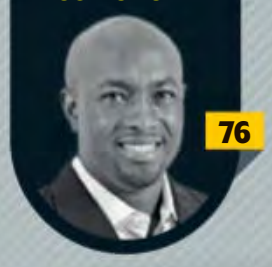

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UEFA World Cup Qualifiers

KEIR RADNEDGE

World Cup holders...France were held to a 1-1 draw by Ukraine in March

Rivalries renewed on road to Qatar

While some nations will also be embarking on new eras following the appointment of new head coaches

The interruption of the rescheduled Euro 2020 tournament has cast an intriguing air of mystery over Europe's resumed Qatar 2022 qualifiers.

Under pressure...Germany were beaten 2-1 by North Macedonia at home in March and are currently outside the qualifying places

Usually the World Cup preliminaries politely await the post-Euro autumn, when shattered summertime dreams can be renewed. This time around the horizon has been clouded by the Euro fall-out. Notable among those with a hazy view will be Germany, Russia and Switzerland, who have all changed their national coach.

Germany always knew that Joachim Low would abandon ship after sailing them into the World Cup qualifiers and the Euros. Hansi Flick thus had a watching brief at Euro 2020. Not so well-prepared for a change of command were Switzerland and Russia after contrasting European Championship campaigns.

Stanislav Cherchesov's word-spinning proved insufficient to keep him in post after Russia's group-stage exit; the haste of his departure was evidenced by the need for successor Valeri Karpin to double up, initially, with his club job at Rostov before leaving the club in early August.

By contrast Switzerland's impressive progress to the Euro 2020 quarter-finals, including the dramatic shootout victory over France, raised significantly the profile of coach Vladimir Petkovic – so significant that they lost him to Bordeaux in France. His replacement is former Swiss defender Murat Yakin, whose coaching CV includes such clubs as Basel and Spartak Moscow.

Four of the ten groups were headed on restart by teams who had won all three early games: newly-crowned European champions Italy, Euro 2020 runners-up England, Euro 2020 semi-finalists Denmark and, suprisingly, Armenia.

Roberto Mancini's *Azzurri* are in one of the least threatening groups and should soon be booking flights to Doha. Their only serious resistance may be the imminent away trip to a Switzerland team under new management and then the reverse tie in November, although the 3-0 victory over the "*Nati*" at the Euros suggests that it would take quite

Tigran Barseghyan...the midfielder has scored twice for Armenia in Group J

Top scorer...Serbia striker Aleksandar Mitrovic

the turnaround from new coach Yakin in the dugout to slow down Italy's progress.

Denmark were swept to the Euro semi-finals on a powerful wave of emotion arising out of the Christian Eriksen drama. Whether they can rekindle such spirit is open to question but they boast a secure cushion thanks to a 4-0 away win over Austria, who proved no one's pushovers in the summer.

England's return to action will be accompanied by the usual Premier League managers' bleats about fixture pressure and injury fears. Poland and Hungary present awkward stumbling blocks, whether Gareth Southgate looks to make changes to his team or stick with the formula that took them to the Euro 2020 final. Either way, for all the talent, England must prove more consistently creative to justify World Cup optimism.

Italy missing out on Russia 2018 will offer a warning to the other big-hitters. Even Portugal, Spain, France and Germany must conquer their own nerves as well as rivals poised to punish post-Euro jitters.

If Cristiano Ronaldo doesn't surpass Ali Daei's all-time international scoring record against Republic of Ireland, he will be confident of doing it in one of Portugal's following qualifiers against Azerbaijan, Luxembourg or Serbia, for whom Aleksandar Mitrovic tops the scoring charts with five goals. Spain must envy such a striker to complement their build-up skills: that weakness cost them badly in Euro 2020. Still, once they have withstood an immediate test in Sweden the rest should be comparatively plain sailing.

Didier Deschamps survived France's misfiring Euro 2020 campaign and a four-point cushion should permit a comfortable resumption of their World Cup defence. No reigning title-holders have ever failed to qualify (Uruguay did not enter in 1934 after winning in 1930) but *Les Bleus* must sort out attacking balance among Antoine Griezmann, Karim Benzema and Kylian Mbappe to avoid such a fate.

At least Deschamps need not reshuffle his entire team, unlike Flick with Germany. Joshua Kimmich, Serge Gnabry and Co. may come to rue their shock home defeat by North Macedonia in March.

Every new tournament provides a platform for surprise and Armenia can fulfil this role after winning their first three Group J ties. Goals from Tigran Barseghyan inspired home victories over Iceland and Romania, an indication of the challenge awaiting in Yerevan after those long flights into European Asia.

Note that North Macedonia, thrilled by their outsiders' Euro debut, also began well in pursuit of what will probably be the "other" qualifying slot with Germany.

Few other mid and low-range nations threaten to disturb the status quo. Scotland, encouraged by their Euro campaign, can reach the World Cup finals for the first time since 1998 through Group F. Wales' October 8 trip to Czech Republic can be crucial in Group E while, the next day, the fate of Teemu Pukki's Finland may rest on their home tie against Ukraine in Group D.

Four of the ten groups were headed on restart by teams who had won all three early games

Winners of the ten groups all qualify direct for the finals in Qatar. The other three slots will be decided by play-offs featuring the ten group runners-up and the two best non-qualifying Nations League group winners (based on Nations League overall ranking). The single-leg semi-finals will be played next March 24-25 and the single-match finals on March 28-29.

THE STANDINGS

GROUP A

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Portugal	3	2	1	0	7
2	Serbia	3	2	1	0	7
3	Luxembourg	2	1	0	1	3
4	Rep. of Ireland	2	0	0	2	0
5	Azerbaijan	2	0	0	2	0

GROUP B

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Spain	3	2	1	0	7
2	Sweden	2	2	0	0	6
3	Greece	2	0	2	0	2
4	Georgia	3	0	1	2	1
5	Kosovo	2	0	0	2	0

GROUP C

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Italy	3	3	0	0	9
2	Switzerland	2	2	0	0	6
3	Northern Ireland	2	0	1	1	1
4	Bulgaria	3	0	1	2	1
5	Lithuania	2	0	0	2	0

GROUP D

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	France	3	2	1	0	7
2	Ukraine	3	0	3	0	3
3	Finland	2	0	2	0	2
4	Bosnia-Herzegovina	2	0	1	1	1
5	Kazakhstan	2	0	1	1	1

GROUP E

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Belgium	3	2	1	0	7
2	Czech Republic	3	1	1	1	4
3	Wales	2	1	0	1	3
4	Belarus	2	1	0	1	3
5	Estonia	2	0	0	2	0

GROUP F

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Denmark	3	3	0	0	9
2	Scotland	3	1	2	0	5
3	Israel	3	1	1	1	4
4	Austria	3	1	1	1	4
5	Faroe Islands	3	0	1	2	1
6	Moldova	3	0	1	2	1

GROUP G

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Turkey	3	2	1	0	7
2	Netherlands	3	2	0	1	6
3	Montenegro	3	2	0	1	6
4	Norway	3	2	0	1	6
5	Latvia	3	0	1	2	1
6	Gibraltar	3	0	0	3	0

GROUP H

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Croatia	3	2	0	1	6
2	Russia	3	2	0	1	6
3	Slovakia	3	1	2	0	5
4	Cyprus	3	1	1	1	4
5	Slovenia	3	1	0	2	3
6	Malta	3	0	1	2	1

GROUP I

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	England	3	3	0	0	9
2	Hungary	3	2	1	0	7
3	Albania	3	2	0	1	6
4	Poland	3	1	1	1	4
5	Andorra	3	0	0	3	0
6	San Marino	3	0	0	3	0

GROUP J

		P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Armenia	3	3	0	0	9
2	North Macedonia	3	2	0	1	6
3	Germany	3	2	0	1	6
4	Romania	3	1	0	2	3
5	Iceland	3	1	0	2	3
6	Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	0

CONMEBOL World Cup Qualifiers

TIM VICKERY

So many games, so little time

Chaotic schedule could produce interesting results in tightly-packed table

The original reluctance of the players to take part in the recent Copa America was based on two areas of discontent. One, of course, was the pandemic. The other was the idea that preference should have been given to getting up to scratch with World Cup qualification.

This question now needs to be addressed. There are 12 rounds of qualifiers to complete by the end of March and, even with an extra FIFA date created at the end of January, this is still going to be a very tight squeeze, almost certainly involving triple headers in ten days in a vast continent.

The games, then, will be coming thick and fast. And the scenario has divided the teams into what effectively looks like two different competitions.

Brazil and Argentina can concentrate on preparing a team for Qatar. That does not mean that the pressure is off – it never is for a Brazil coach, especially one who has just lost a Copa America at home, the first time this has ever happened to Brazil. So although his side are 100 per cent in the campaign, and qualification is close to a formality, Tite needs a good run of results coupled with impressive performances. In a sense he is a victim of his own success. Five years ago when he took over Brazil were struggling to make it to Russia. That task then became so easy that victories over South American rivals have been taken for granted – until, of course, the final of the Copa. But to compete with the western Europeans at the end of next year – the true challenge – he will surely have to solve his problem at centre-forward.

Rivals Argentina are unbeaten and relatively comfortable in second place. They emerge from the Copa with morale sky high. There are potential dangers here – the sense, after ending the long wait for a title, of mission accomplished, for example, which undid Colombia after they had won the 2001 Copa. And the defensive positions are still not nailed down. But the rest of the campaign should serve as an audition for Qatar.

Everyone else is scrambling around with hopes and fears, and just five points separate third-placed Ecuador from bottom-of-the-table Peru.

These teams had contrasting fortunes in the Copa. Peru will hope that, as happened after the 2016 Copa, the recent tournament will serve as a springboard to more solid performances in qualification. Ecuador were without a win in all seven games they played in June and July. But coach

Brazil and Argentina can concentrate on preparing a team for Qatar…everyone else is scrambling around with hopes and fears

Leaders…Brazil have a 100% winning record in qualifying so far

Update

Copa champs... Argentina resume qualifying as champions of South America

Troubled times...James Rodriguez is misfiring for his country

Marcelo Martins...the Bolivian is the top scorer in qualifying with six goals

Gustavo Alfaro consistently played down the importance of the Copa, his side did well against the tougher opponents and, as Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni commented after a hard-fought quarter-final, they have a highly-promising crop of youngsters – something that must make Chile very jealous.

Uruguay have made it to the last three World Cups and Colombia to the last two, and both must feel confident of making it to Qatar. But there are problems to resolve.

As both Russia 2018 and Brazil 2021 made clear, Colombia are badly dependent on James Rodriguez for attacking inspiration. In the Copa they finished third after winning just two games from seven – a record that can work much better in a tournament than in a qualification league.

THE STANDINGS

	Team	P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Brazil	6	6	0	0	18
2	Argentina	6	3	3	0	12
3	Ecuador	6	3	0	3	9
4	Uruguay	6	2	2	2	8
5	Colombia	6	2	2	2	8
6	Paraguay	6	1	4	1	7
7	Chile	6	1	3	2	6
8	Bolivia	6	1	2	3	5
9	Venezuela	6	1	1	4	4
10	Peru	6	1	1	4	4

Rodriguez has clearly fallen out with some members of the squad, and these relations need to be patched up quickly.

Uruguay are very short of goals, which, given the attacking resources at their disposal, is a huge disappointment. Has 4-4-2 become a straitjacket? Should they continue with both Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani up front? These are big decisions for coach Oscar Tabarez to take.

Elsewhere, Paraguay have been dropping too many points at home, proof that coach Eduardo Berizzo has as yet been unable to implant the ultra-attacking game of his mentor, Marcelo Bielsa. Bolivia have started to pick up away points – two draws either side of a home win, giving coach Cesar Farias hope that they can shrug off a dreadful start, take advantage of the extreme altitude of La Paz and make it to their first World Cup since 1994 in the United States.

And, for the moment, at least, Venezuela can still dream of making their World Cup debut. The COVID epidemic they suffered during the Copa prevented coach Jose Peseiro doing anything else than defending in depth and hoping, and the two draws they obtained were the motive of considerable pride. Now they should have their attacking weapons back – striker Salomon Rondon flanked by quick wingers. And so they, like everyone else in the most competitive qualification campaign on the planet, are still entitled to have their sights on Qatar.

AFC World Cup Qualifiers

JOHN DUERDEN

Preview

Vietnam add intrigue to familiar line-up

Southeast Asian nation in final group stage for the first time, while continent's leading powers prepare to face off again

Familiarity may not breed contempt in the final round of qualification for the 2022 World Cup in Asia, but it has left fans and journalists around the continent desperately searching for something new.

The 12 teams that progressed through to this stage were, on July 1, divided into two groups of six, with the top two from each going to Qatar and the two third-placed teams entering the play-offs.

Of the four top seeds, Iran and South Korea were placed together for the fourth consecutive campaign, which meant, over in Group B, Japan and Australia are also together, as they have been ever since qualification for 2010. There's not much new to be said about these big rivals meeting once – well, twice – more as they know each other so well. Of this quartet, who all appeared at the last two World Cups, the Socceroos may be the most vulnerable, though, of course, the pandemic is likely to have a huge part to play and could level the playing field.

Group B looks to be the most interesting on paper, not least due to the presence of Vietnam in this stage for the first time. The Golden Stars have been the most improved team in Asian football in the past few years. Under the "Korean Hiddink" Park Hang-seo (a member of the Dutchman's coaching staff at the 2002 World Cup), Vietnam

Upstarts...Vietnam midfielder Nguyen Cong Phuong (right)

One to watch... UAE's Abdullah Ramadan (right) in action v Iraq

We meet again...Iran and South Korea will face each other for the fourth consecutive qualifying campaign

Group B looks to be the most interesting on paper, not least due to the presence of Vietnam in this stage for the first time

have added steel, determination and hunger to what was always a talented team, including midfielders such as Nguyen Cong Phuong and Nguyen Quang Hai. A third-place finish is a long shot but not out of the question.

The same can be said about China, another team full of domestic-based players who are able to have lengthy pre-qualifier training camps and don't have to worry about players in Europe struggling to report for national team duty due to travel restrictions. Not just that but former Everton midfielder Li Tie succeeded Marcello Lippi in 2019 and, quite frankly, has done a better job than the Italian.

Despite a dodgy start in the second round, China won the last four games to move into the final round. The team looks settled and more confident and has been boosted by the additions of Brazilians who have been naturalised after successful stints in the league. Elkeson, Alan Carvalho and Fernandinho (or, to give them their Chinese names: Ai Kesen, A Lan and Fei Nanduo) were all in the squad. The league will be paused well before any qualifier to give Li and his players as much chance to add to the country's sole World Cup appearance back in 2002. It's hard to see Team Dragon taking one of the top two spots but third is a definite possibility.

Saudi Arabia pipped Australia to second place on the road to Russia and will be dangerous again. The Green Falcons have been steadily improving under Herve Renard – the man who led Morocco to Russia – since the Frenchman was appointed in 2019 and this is another national team that has a completely domestic-based squad with a league that will, once again, do all it can to help; there won't be any club v country arguments in Riyadh, just as there won't in Hanoi or Beijing.

Herve Renard...the coach took charge of Saudi Arabia in July 2019

Group A looks a little less diverse, as five of the six are all West Asian nations. While Iran and South Korea are expected to make it, it is not a given. Iran struggled through the second round of qualification but improved after replacing coach Marc Wilmots with Dragan Skokic in February 2020. In Seoul, there is a feeling that coach Paulo Bento has not yet managed to get the best out of the Taeguk Warriors since arriving in 2018. The Portuguese boss may not survive if the team starts slowly against Iraq and Lebanon.

Of the other teams looking to take advantage of any slip-ups, United Arab Emirates should be well placed. The UAE FA re-appointed Bert van Marwijk last year and there have been noticeable improvements in performance. Abdullah Ramadan has emerged as a midfielder of vision and creativity and has helped Ali Mabkhout move into joint-second in the active international goalscorer rankings – going into this international window, he has 76, level with Lionel Messi, and only behind Cristiano Ronaldo.

Syria and Iraq are unpredictable, partly because they never play at home. There is talent in both countries, especially the latter, but there is a lack of consistency. Lebanon, the lowest-ranked team in the group, is a tough place to go but have other priorities. Given the collapse of the country's economy and currency, the $2.5 million earned for reaching the third round will go to help prop up the domestic game and pay wages of clubs around the country.

While the draw does look very familiar, it does not mean that there won't be any surprises; especially in a world of COVID-19, which is more than capable of throwing spanners in the works of even the best-laid plans.

THE DRAW

GROUP A

- Iran
- Iraq
- Lebanon
- South Korea
- Syria
- United Arab Emirates

GROUP B

- Australia
- China
- Japan
- Oman
- Saudi Arabia
- Vietnam

CAF World Cup Qualifiers

MARK GLEESON

Favourites set to prosper

Few surprises on the cards in the group stage of Africa's World Cup qualifying

Algeria will go into Africa's twice delayed kick-off of the group phase of World Cup qualifiers as arguably the best prepared team to ever enter the African preliminaries.

Qualifying was supposed to begin in June, but was postponed when several countries had their stadiums deemed unfit for use for international matches. Instead of taking a holiday, the Algerians used the international window to set a new record for an unbeaten run by an African side.

Friendly wins over Mauritania (4-1 in Blida), Mali (1-0 in Blida) and 2-0 away against Tunisia took their streak to 27, going past the old record held by the Ivory Coast. Even Riyad Mahrez held off on his post-season holidays after Manchester City's run to the Champions League final, scoring in two of the three games as he helped his country fine-tune their preparations.

They now go into qualifying as the form side and could well sweep through Group A where Burkina Faso look the only side capable of offering any potential resistance.

Algeria are in a purple patch, fuelled by their Africa Cup of Nations success in Egypt in 2019, which ended almost 30 years without any continental success and has re-awoken a sleeping giant. The last defeat suffered by Algeria was an away game in a Cup of Nations qualifier against Benin in October 2018, and they start their World Cup qualifying bid at home against minnows Djibouti in a perfect dress rehearsal for their trip to Ouagadougou straight after, for what is likely to be the only troubling clash they will have in their group.

Coach Djamel Belmadi looks a no-nonsense operator, his pool of players is expanding all the time, particularly among the expatriate Algerians in France, and there is a self-belief that had previously been missing, as well as a record to now protect when they start the qualifiers.

There are ten qualifying groups in the African prelims, with only the winners advancing to home-and-away play-offs next March, which will determine the continent's five sides for Qatar 2022. That only comes after the completion of the group phase in November, so there are no patterns to discern or potential match-ups to predict.

But it is easy to see the likes of Mali, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia going through from the group stage, as they look overwhelming favourites in their respective groups.

Group D is set to supply fireworks

Rematch...Group G arch-rivals Ghana and South Africa have already played each other this year

Unbeaten...Algeria go into the second round of Africa's World Cup qualifiers full of confidence

ABOVE: Under pressure...2022 AFCON hosts Cameroon

ABOVE RIGHT: DR Congo coach... Hector Cuper

as Cameroon and the Ivory Coast go head-to-head in what is a tough draw for both countries.

Cameroon can ill afford to miss out just months before they host the Cup of Nations finals, but they have not been convincing over the last year. The Ivorians will be able to forge an early advantage when they host Cameroon in Abidjan in the second game of the group.

Ghana will have the psychological edge over South Africa in Group G, after edging them in recent Cup of Nations qualifiers, but there is also the up-and-coming Zimbabwe to contend with. If they look after their players despite their limited resources, they could prove a real surprise package given the quality of their squad.

The last defeat suffered by Algeria was an away game in a Cup of Nations qualifier against Benin in October 2018

Group J is wide open as Benin, DR Congo, Madagascar and Tanzania compete. They all have in common the fact that none were able to qualify for January's Cup of Nations finals.

Employing the veteran coach Hector Cuper is a statement of intent from the Congolese and they will be marginal favourites because they also have the best squad, even if they are often let down by administrative inefficiency and bungling officialdom. Benin are sticking with veteran French coach Michel Dussuyer despite their failure to get the point they needed in a belated June qualifier to reach the Nations Cup finals and will also fancy their chances.

There very few outsiders worthy of consideration, however the Cape Verde Islands always push way above their weight and Zambia are also capable but in something of a slump. They fired Serbian coach Milutin Sredojevich in July after a poor COSAFA Cup campaign, and Under-20 coach Beston Chambeshi is caretaker for the start of the qualifiers where they are away in Mauritania and then hosting Tunisia. Their two key players, Patson Daka and Enock Mwepu, have just moved to the Premier League.

Africa opened World Cup qualification way back in September 2019 with a first round of knockout matches involving the bottom 28 countries in the FIFA rankings. The extraordinary two-year gap between the first and second stage is indicative of the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE DRAW

GROUP A
- Algeria
- Burkina Faso
- Djibouti
- Niger

GROUP B
- Equatorial Guinea
- Mauritania
- Tunisia
- Zambia

GROUP C
- Cape Verde
- Central African Republic
- Liberia
- Nigeria

GROUP D
- Cameroon
- Ivory Coast
- Malawi
- Mozambique

GROUP E
- Kenya
- Mali
- Rwanda
- Uganda

GROUP F
- Angola
- Egypt
- Gabon
- Libya

GROUP G
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- South Africa
- Zimbabwe

GROUP H
- Congo
- Namibia
- Senegal
- Togo

GROUP I
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Morocco
- Sudan

GROUP J
- Benin
- DR Congo
- Madagascar
- Tanzania

CONCACAF World Cup Qualifiers

LASANA LIBURD

Final eight on the road to Qatar

Who will join USA and Mexico at the World Cup?

Canada talisman... Alphonso Davies

In the 2018 World Cup qualifying series, the fireworks came on the final matchday, as bottom-of-the-table Trinidad and Tobago eliminated USA with a shock 2-1 win in Couva, a result that saw Panama advance to their first-ever senior FIFA tournament.

Is there a surprise brewing for the Qatar 2022 World Cup qualifying series?

First, let's look at the three nations that have essentially hogged CONCACAF's qualifying berths since the turn of the millennium (USA's 2018 banana skin notwithstanding): Mexico, Costa Rica and the United States.

An inaugural CONCACAF Nations League crown plus a seventh Gold Cup victory with a virtual C team was an awesome and timely show of strength by USA coach Gregg Berhalter, and the Stars and Stripes will surely be anxious to get going in CONCACAF's new Octagonal.

Chelsea attacker Christian Pulisic is USA's marquee player and leads a gifted fresh-faced cast that includes 23-year-old Juventus midfield fixer Weston McKennie, teenage Borussia Dortmund schemer Gio Reyna and 21-year-old frontman Josh Sargent, a recent acquisition for Norwich City from Werder Bremen.

USA have tallied ten straight competitive wins since a surprise 2-0 Nations League defeat to Canada in Toronto in October 2019 and are the confederation's form team. It is difficult not to imagine them going the full distance in this World Cup qualifying edition.

Mexico football fans would not have enjoyed this summer too much, as they lost successive finals to their bitter North American neighbours in the Nations League and Gold Cup tournaments, before being edged out on penalties by Brazil in the semi-finals at the Tokyo Olympics.

Coach Gerardo "Tata" Martinez also lost star Napoli attacker Hirving Lozano to a serious injury within ten minutes of their Gold Cup opener – a goalless draw against Trinidad and Tobago.

Mexico still have a player pool to envy though, with Argentina-born Monterrey forward Rogelio Funes Mori emerging as one of the Gold Cup's standouts, while star Wolves centre-forward Raul Jimenez is on the mend after a lengthy injury-enforced layoff.

Behind them, 36-year-old Club America goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa shows little sign of slowing down, while Ajax defensive midfielder Edson Alvarez and flanker Jesus Corona offer guile and panache to the cause.

> **USA have tallied ten straight competitive wins…it is difficult not to imagine them going the full distance in this World Cup qualifying edition**

And, of course, there is Mexico's intimidating Azteca Stadium in Mexico City where they have not lost in 11 outings – nine wins and two draws – since a 2-1 defeat to Honduras in September 2013.

Should Mexico's home form hold, *El Tricolor* will also be amongst the 32 nations at the Qatar World Cup.

Top two...USA have beaten Mexico twice this summer

An alarming loss of form by Costa Rica, coupled with the resurgence of Jamaica and Canada, means that CONCACAF's automatic third place is far from a shoe-in.

Gifted Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Keylor Navas, Alajuelense playmaker Bryan Ruiz and experienced midfielder Celso Borges are suing ex-Costa Rica FA executives for defamation over a claim that they threatened to lose matches on purpose to get rid of former national coach Jorge Luis Pinto.

It was an unwelcome distraction during a period in which Costa Rica tallied just one win in 14 matches under coach Ronald Gonzalez. Luis Suarez replaced him for the Gold Cup and steered *Los Ticos* to wins over Guadeloupe, Jamaica and Suriname before they fell 2-0 to Canada in the quarter-finals.

It was, at best, an anaemic showing from a near full-strength Costa Rica squad. And Suarez will hope that Navas inspires when he returns from the shoulder injury that kept him out of the Gold Cup.

Jamaica have had their own internal issues, although talk of a player strike over match fees has dissipated. Head coach Theodore Whitmore settled for a quarter-final finish at the Gold Cup but he can point to a weakened squad and an untimely injury to new Aston Villa signing and talented attacker Leon Bailey.

Jamaica playmaker... Leon Bailey

At the last three Gold Cups, the Reggae Boyz, led by wily Philadelphia Union goalkeeper Andre Blake, were twice runners-up and fourth-placed finishers respectively and must fancy their chances of advancing to their second World Cup finals.

Their odds of doing so should shorten considerably if English-born West Ham United forward Michail Antonio joins the cause, as has been rumoured.

Canada will be there or thereabouts as well. The Canucks took the long way into the Octagonal, as they navigated two qualifying rounds to get here – an inconvenience that Mexico, USA, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Honduras were not asked to endure.

Pacy and versatile 20-year-old Bayern Munich flanker Alphonso Davies is Canada's most recognisable face but hardly their only match-winner, as prolific Besiktas forward Cyle Larin, veteran playmaker Junior Hoilett and New England Revolution attacker Tajon Buchanan demonstrated in their 2021 Gold Cup semi-final run.

At present, Canada's COVID-19 restrictions force their footballers to play all their games on the road. If that holds, coach John Herdman's task is more difficult – although not insurmountable for arguably the most talented crop of players in their history.

Honduras, El Salvador and Panama complete the line-up and will not be out of their depth, although they are not obvious contenders for a World Cup qualifying spot.

Honduras are generally tight at the back with some bite at the other end through athletic Boavista attacker Alberth Elis, while their Tokyo Olympic qualification suggests that a talented crop is emerging – led by 23-year-old Reggina flanker Rigoberto Rivas. But can coach Fabian Coito fashion his players into an irrepressible unit in time?

Panama have been lukewarm themselves and, having only just bested Curacao in the second qualifying round, it is hard to see their adventure lasting much longer. If they are to taste success, 32-year-old UNAM Pumas forward Gabriel Torres would be heavily involved as he looks to add to an international tally of 22 goals from 96 outings.

El Salvador, coached by former USA playmaker Hugo Perez, strengthened recently with the addition of American-born midfielder Alex Roldan (Seattle Sounders) while CD Aguila forward David Rugamos will hope to continue his purple patch of eight qualifying goals from his first six qualifiers.

El Salvador have not qualified for a World Cup since 1982. But then they have not made it even this far in 12 years. One step at a time.

THE FINAL EIGHT

- Canada
- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Mexico
- Panama
- USA

The month in numbers

The facts and stats that have caught our eye in the world of football this month...

6

Leicester City's 1-0 victory over Manchester City means that the FA Cup winners have beaten the league champions in six of the last seven Community Shield clashes.

$250m

Amount that Internazionale president Steven Zhang is being pursued for in a Hong Kong court.

Olympics ace... Netherlands' Vivianne Miedema

10

Goals scored by Vivianne Miedema at the Tokyo Olympics – a record haul for a single tournament.

24

Robert Lewandowski's match-winning brace against Borussia Dortmund in the German Super Cup took him to 24 goals against his former club – level with Wolfsburg as the team he has scored against the most times.

4

Red cards shown to Roma players and their coach Jose Mourinho during a pre-season friendly defeat to Real Betis.

£3.4bn

The total fall in European football's revenues due to the pandemic, according to Deloitte.

£6bn

Reported relief fund planned by UEFA to help clubs across Europe.

195

FIFA-recognised international caps won by legendary Malaysia defender Soh Chin Ann, now officially acknowledged as the most-capped male player of all time – 27 years after he retired.

£10m

Annual value of Arsenal's sleeve sponsor from the Rwandan tourist board – despite president Paul Kagame criticising the club's performances on Twitter.

£100,000

Transfer offer made for professional esports FIFA player Tom Leese – the first-ever offer of its kind.

2022

Return date for Leicester City's Wesley Fofana after a horror tackle from Fer Nino in the Foxes' pre-season friendly with Villarreal.

3

Chelsea's victory against Villarreal in the UEFA Super Cup ended a three-match losing streak in the competition, having lost the 2012, 2013 and 2019 finals.

Purple patch... Celtic's new goal king Furuhashi

13

Goals scored by Celtic new boy Kyogo Furuhashi in an 11-game spell for the Scottish side and his previous club Vissel Kobe.

£288.8m

Cumulative transfer fees spent on Romelu Lukaku following his club-record £97.5m transfer from Internazionale to Chelsea, making him the most expensive footballer of all time.

1

After their defeat to Pacos de Ferreira, Tottenham became the first English club to lose a game in UEFA's Conference League, Champions League, Europa League, Cup Winners' Cup and Intertoto Cup.

UEFA Super Cup... Chelsea triumphant

36

Spanish winger Pedro recently became the first player in 36 years to move directly from Roma to Lazio, and only the fourth player in history to do so after Astutillo Malgioglio (1986), Franco Cordova (1979) and Attilio Ferraris (1936).

In-form... Hulk

7

Copa Libertadores goals scored by Hulk since returning to Brazil, to fire Atletico Mineiro to their first semi-final since winning the 2013 edition.

38

Aged 38 years and 93 days, Dani Alves became the oldest medallist in men's football Olympics history.

5

Consecutive years in which Mohamed Salah has scored on the opening day of the new season – a Premier League record.

Belarus

STEVE MENARY

Krumkachy...the Minsk-based side are flying high in the second tier

Anti-establishment club under attack

Second-tier Belarusian side Krumkachy are fighting for both promotion and democracy

Like many Eastern European countries, leading clubs in Belarus survive in part or completely on some sort of state subsidy – apart from one. Krumkachy FC was founded a decade ago by a group of fans, and named after the ravens that dominate the skies of their home city, Minsk.

Krumkachy were outsiders from the outset and their independence made the club popular with young Belarusians who did not understand why they could order pizza on their smartphone but not vote out their autocratic president, Alexander Lukashenko.

Football in Belarus briefly achieved global recognition last year as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down many leagues apart from their Premier League. Belarus then stayed in the headlines due to protests over contested elections to remove Lukashenko, who claimed vodka and saunas could cure the global pandemic.

With all Belarus' clubs eliminated from UEFA competition by the end of July, football in the country has diminished. Krumkachy's place as a hotbed for protest has flourished and the club is coming under increasing attack from the authorities.

> Krumkachy's place as a hotbed for protest has flourished and the club is coming under increasing attack from the authorities

Krumkachy had won promotion to the Premier League in 2015 but were relegated after three seasons and denied a licence to return in 2018. That in itself is not unheard of. Every year, a handful of clubs in the top two leagues struggle to qualify for a licence due to problems ranging from stadia, finances or lack of a youth academy. But Krumkachy fear their role in the protests is the real reason for the increasing assault.

On August 30 last year, two Krumkachy players, Pavel Rassolko and Sergei Kozeka, were returning from training when they were caught up in a protest march and detained by Belarusian security forces, who have locked up more than 600 people.

Kozeka was severely beaten and suffered a fracture of the third vertebra and damaged kidneys. The pair were released but there were protests before Krumkachy's next match, a cup game with Dinamo Minsk. Krumkachy's players refused to leave the dressing room unless they were allowed to wear T-shirts supporting their injured team-mates.

Protest leader Maria Kolesnikova was also at the game, which Krumkachy surprisingly won 2-0 against Belarus' establishment side Dinamo Minsk. Six days later, Kolesnikova was abducted and also jailed.

Krumkachy's profile grew further when Aleksandr "Sasha" Ivulin, a popular blogger, joined the club to make a series of videos on how to become a professional player, and given the squad number 25. Ivulin was an amateur striker and the partnership proved popular, only for the blogger to also be detained by the police, prompting more protests from fans.

On the pitch, Krumkachy are in the running to return to the top flight under experienced coach Oleg Kubarev, but that could be scuppered if a rumoured plan for clubs to show a significant sum in their bank account before being allowed access to the Premier League – rumoured to be $1m – is ratified.

The plans are to prevent clubs folding mid-season due to financial problems. Sputnik folded during the 2021 Premier League season and Torpedo Minsk, who were ironically promoted ahead of Krumkachy in 2018, folded their senior side a year later.

Krumkachy only have a budget of $400,000, paid in stages by private sponsors, and have no chance of being able to comply with a rule that may have a good aim on the surface but would suit the authorities in keeping Belarus' football outsiders out of the elite.

Number 25... Krumkachy fans show their support for the detained Aleksandr Ivulin

Protesting...police disperse protesters on the streets of Minsk last year

Japan

SAMINDRA KUNTI

Brazil retain gold medal

But the country's second consecutive Olympics victory fails to erase doubts about football's long-term future at the Games

Even Dani Alves, the 38-year-old warrior and right-back with countless trophies to his name, kneeled in celebration. After an enthralling contest, Brazil retained their Olympic crown with a 2-1 final win against a valiant but exhausted Spain, featuring in their third extra-time of the tournament. Brazil coach Andre Jardine hailed the victory against "a very difficult school", pointing out that his team demonstrated enough "determination and pride" to ultimately prevail. Jardine feted the victory with beer and music from Oasis.

And so the gold medal remained in South America, eluding Europe once again. The continent that has come to dominate the World Cup has not produced an Olympic winner since 1992, when Spain defeated Poland 3-2 in Barcelona. That squad included Pep Guardiola, Luis Enrique and Kiko in the tournament's first iteration as an Under-23 competition. The 2008 Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling that clubs were not obliged to release players for the Beijing Olympic Games further corroded the competition's quality, leading to an existential vacuum: what does Olympic football really represent? What does it mean? Who is it for?

The identity crisis was on full show in Tokyo, where Under-24 players were eligible because of the event's year-long postponement. Once again, football was an afterthought and a nuisance in the Olympic cosmos, with the spotlight fixed on the likes of Eliud Kipchoge, Tom Daley, Katie Ledecky and Daiki Hashimoto. They conquered hearts and gold, while football – a

Golden goal... Malcom scores the winner in extra-time

Equaliser...Mikel Oyarzabal scores for silver medallists Spain

sport used to hogging all the attention – was left to its own devices. The fact that the tournament began two days before the opening ceremony only added to the sense that it does not really belong.

Olympic football remains questionable, and rightly so. The competition is a slow-burner, somewhere between a development stage and a complete sideshow. In fact, the degree of randomness and different levels of gravitas applied by the participating nations pointed at something entirely else – should football simply be scrapped from the Olympic Games?

With the exception of Spain, the European teams were not invested in the competition. Germany's squad didn't contain a single player from their Euro 2020 party, while their two most experienced players, Max Kruse and Maximilian Arnold, haven't won a senior cap since 2015 and 2014 respectively.

The result was a poor showing in Japan: outclassed in their curtain-raiser by Brazil, with Arnold sent off in a 4-2 defeat, then eliminated by Ivory Coast in a 1-1 draw following a narrow 3-2 victory against Saudi Arabia.

At least the 2016 finalists were not as lamentable as their neighbours France: without cohesion and comprehensive coaching, they exited Group A following heavy defeats against both the hosts and Mexico, elevating French chaos to an art form. With 11 goals conceded – more than any other team in the competition – their performance exacerbated a miserable summer for French football after their shock round of 16 elimination at the European Championship.

In the aftermath, veteran striker Andre-Pierre Gignac pulled no punches. "It was complicated from A to Z. You have to say like it is," said the Tigres striker. "We tried, we gave everything, but the opponents were ready, collectively and physically. When you concede 11 goals, it's not easy, and we have seen that taking the Games seriously is important."

What does Olympic football really represent? What does it mean? Who is it for?

None of Matteo Guendouzi, Kylian Mbappe, Eduardo Camavinga, Dayot Upamecano or Houssem Aouar, all eligible, were present in Tokyo. A team's chances depended on the availability of their best players. Burnley's Chris Wood featured in New Zealand's decent run to the quarter-finals and Spain's squad included six players from Euro 2020, enough quality to top Group C ahead of Egypt and grind their way past both Ivory Coast and Japan in the knockout stages.

But the final, Spain's first since the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games silver medal against Cameroon, was a step too far. Profligacy in front of goal, a trait that also cost the senior team at Euro 2020, struck again. In first-half stoppage-time they fell behind as Matheus Cunha seized his chance to grab the opener. In Brazil, the Olympic outfit is a halfway house to the senior team and the Hertha Berlin striker, a quick, two-footed back-to-goal centre-forward, might well solve head coach Tite's attacking conundrum.

Real Sociedad's Mikel Oyarzabal equalised in the second half, taking the game to extra-time, but Jardine's side relished the space on the counter-attack that was afforded them by Spain. Other opponents, including Mexico in the semi-finals, had sat back to absorb the pressure, but the Spanish were open and, in the 108th minute, substitute Malcom raced in behind to net the Brazilian winner from an acute angle. By then, Spain were dead on their feet. Midfielder Pedri was playing in his 73rd match of the season.

Tournament top goalscorer Richarlison was no different. He featured in 40 matches for Everton before embarking on an odyssey to participate in the World Cup qualifiers, Copa America and Tokyo Olympic Games. In just over two months, he played in 20 cities and four competitions on three continents. His explanation? "I'm certainly crazy for football and for the *Selecao* shirt."

His attitude and rich reward proved that Brazil's obsession with Olympic gold has not diminished after Rio 2016, a consequence of the tournament's importance in South America's football culture. Some other continents also rate the event highly, but what Tokyo 2020 demonstrated above all is that Olympic football requires a major rethink if it wants to remain relevant at all.

Veteran...captain Dani Alves celebrates winning the gold medal

Exhausted...Pedri sinks to his knees following his 73rd game of the season

CONCACAF Gold Cup

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER

Review

USA triumph in Gold Cup

The Stars and Stripes take the title with third-choice squad

The United States National Men's Team started the summer with a specific set of goals: to end their run of eight years without a competitive win against arch-rivals Mexico; to give their new and talented generation minutes with the national team jersey; and to win a title along the way. Three months later, the mission was accomplished, and then some.

After breaking the famous streak in the Nations League, defeating Mexico 3-2 in the final, coach Gregg Berhalter decided to rest his best players and face the continental tournament, the Gold Cup, with an alternative team,

Elation...Nicholas Gioacchini (right) and Miles Robinson (left) celebrate USA's late winner

Victory...USA players celebrate with the trophy

Forlorn...Qatar's players are distraught after conceding a late goal against the USA in the semi-finals

made up of mostly MLS players.

Nobody, not even the most loyal fans, thought that this team was in a position to win the competition, especially since Mexico chose the opposite path. Fired up by the previous defeat, coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino decided to bet everything on the tournament and bring his best available squad. Barring the absence of injured attacker Hirving Lozano, and goalkeeper and captain Guillermo Ochoa, it was, so to speak, Mexico's A Team against USA's C Team.

Throughout the competition, despite making it through the rounds, the doubts generated by Berhalter's team did not cease. The United States opened the tournament with a drawn out 1-0 win over Haiti, where an early goal by Sam Vines somewhat masked criticism for not being able to fully counter the physical game of the Caribbeans.

After a 6-1 victory over the weak Martinique, the questions returned in the win over Canada, again 1-0. Shaq Moore opened the scoring in the first minute of the match but, from then on, the Canadians were the best team and just couldn't find their way to the goal of the always-excellent Matt Turner.

The win secured a place in the knockout round, but the road didn't get any easier from there. Schalke's young forward Matthew Hoppe, just one of four European-based players in the squad, unlocked a tough match against a physical Jamaica in the quarter-finals. The United States did not perform badly, but it was not enough to allay doubts.

And if the Stars and Stripes were superior to their rivals in the quarter-finals, the same could not be said for the semis. The opponents were Qatar, invited to the competition, who arrived with a full-strength squad and who had surprised with an entertaining, offensive style throughout the tournament.

> It was, so to speak, Mexico's A Team against USA's C Team

During long stretches of the match, the Qataris were much better, but they encountered an extraordinary Turner in the American goal, and even had a penalty in the second half, but their captain Hassan Al Haydos sent his effort over the bar. When the match seemed destined for extra-time, Gyasi Zardes – who, at 29, was the team's oldest outfield player – finished off a great pass from Nicholas Gioacchini to seal the United States' ticket to the final.

There awaited a Mexico team that were considered big favourites due to the experience and quality of their players, in spite of the fact that they hadn't played particularly well in the tournament. But the Stars and Stripes were up to the task.

Despite being territorially dominated, appealing to order and discipline, Gregg Berhalter's boys managed to limit *El Tri*'s offensive power and even generated the two clearest chances of the match against the run of play. Twice striker Paul Arriola came close to scoring, but he was prevented: first by Mexico goalkeeper Alfredo Talavera, then later by the post.

The game ended 0-0 in regulation time, and when, after a tense overtime period a penalty shootout seemed almost inevitable, the winning goal arrived. Every time the United States had a chance on set pieces there was a sense of danger, and finally the USMNT finished the job in that way. A fine, curled cross by Kellyn Acosta found Miles Robinson, who beat Talavera to spring the upset.

This was the USA's seventh title in the Gold Cup – second to Mexico's 11 – and, coupled with the triumph in the Nations League, has swung the pendulum again towards the American side after a decade of Aztec rule.

With Qatar 2022 just around the corner, the future looks bright for Berhalter and his young team. While in the always-unstable Mexico, the waters are beginning to become muddy in what, before the summer, was a honeymoon period for Gerardo Martino and the impatient Mexican supporters.

Player of the Tournament... Mexico midfielder Hector Herrera

SEPTEMBER 3-29, 2021

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

(All kick-off times are BST)

Friday September 3

EUROPE: With a pause in the week's World Cup qualifiers, the U21s take over. England travel to Romania for a friendly, while a host of others play qualifiers for the next European Championship.
SOUTH AMERICA: Chile host Brazil in the most eye-catching CONMEBOL World Cup qualifier.
CONCACAF: The final round of World Cup qualifying begins, with Mexico playing host to Jamaica.

Saturday September 4

EUROPE: France and Ukraine meet for the third time in 12 months, with the previous results a 1-1 draw and a 7-1 win for *Les Bleus*. Elsewhere, Scotland host Moldova and Republic of Ireland face Azerbaijan.

Sunday September 5

EUROPE: Switzerland meet Italy in a repeat of the Euros group stage. England, Spain, Belgium and Germany are also in action.
SOUTH AMERICA: In a repeat of the Copa America final, Brazil take on Argentina at the Maracana.
AFRICA: Two of the Premier League's most clinical attackers go head-to-head as Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's Gabon take on Mo Salah's Egypt in a WC qualifier.

Monday September 6

CONCACAF: USA face Canada as the World Cup qualifiers continue.
AFRICA: Ivory Coast v Cameroon is the headline fixture in another round of World Cup qualifying.

Tuesday September 7

EUROPE: France host Finland while Scotland travel to Austria in the next round of UEFA qualifiers.
ASIA: Vietnam's bid to reach their first World Cup continues with a home game against Australia.

Wednesday September 8

EUROPE: Poland host England for the first time since 2012, when the tie was postponed due to torrential rain. Elsewhere, Northern Ireland meet Switzerland, while Spain and Germany travel to Kosovo and Iceland respectively.

Friday September 10

ENGLAND: Birmingham City face Derby County in the first weekend after the international break.
SOUTH AMERICA: Brazil face Peru in the early hours of Friday morning in a repeat of their Copa America semi-final clash.
AFRICA: The first preliminary round of qualifying for the CAF Champions League begins.

Saturday September 11

GERMANY: The Bundesliga's top two from last season, RB Leipzig and Bayern Munich, face off.

Sunday September 12

FRANCE: Monaco and Marseille, two teams hoping to challenge for the Ligue 1 title, go head-to-head.
SPAIN: Barcelona face their first big La Liga test of the season with a trip to Andalusia to face Sevilla.

Monday September 13

ASIA: In the AFC Champions League, five round of 16 games take place from both the east and west sides of the draw.

Wednesday September 15

AFRICA: The 2021 COSAFA Women's Cup gets underway, with record seven-time winners South Africa beginning the defence of their crown against Malawi.
EUROPE: Qualifying for the Women's World Cup begins, starting with Turkey v Portugal.

Thursday September 16

CONCACAF: Philadelphia Union face Mexican giants America in the CONCACAF Champions League.

Friday September 17

ENGLAND: Marcelo Bielsa and Leeds United head to St. James' Park to face Newcastle United.
AFRICA: The Champions League qualifying second legs take place.

Saturday September 18

FRANCE: PSG face fellow Ligue 1 hopefuls Lyon, while rivals Nice and Monaco face off in southern France.
ITALY: Last year's runners-up Milan travel to Turin to face Juventus.

Sunday September 19

ENGLAND: Nuno Espirito Santo faces Chelsea for the first time as Tottenham manager, with the Blues heading to North London.
NETHERLANDS: PSV and Feyenoord clash in Eindhoven.

Top-of-the-table clash...RB Leipzig v Bayern Munich

Monday September 20

EUROPE: Qualifying for the Women's World Cup continues, with England v Luxembourg.

Tuesday September 21

EUROPE: Scotland v Faroe Islands and Estonia v Wales complete the first week of Women's WC qualifiers.
SOUTH AMERICA: It's the last four of the Copa Sudamericana, with Red Bull Bragantino and Penarol facing tough away trips.

Wednesday September 22

SOUTH AMERICA: The semi-finals of the Copa Libertadores kick off, with Brazilian sides Palmeiras and Flamengo among the sides involved.

Thursday September 23

SCOTLAND: In the Scottish League Cup quarter-finals, Championship side Raith Rovers will be hoping to spring a surprise at Celtic.

Friday September 24

GERMANY: Newly-promoted Greuther Furth host Bayern Munich for the first time since 2012-13.

Saturday September 25

ENGLAND: Last season's Champions League finalists, Chelsea and Manchester City, meet for the first time since Porto.
ITALY: In Serie A it's the Rome derby, with Jose Mourinho facing Lazio for the first time since joining Roma in the summer.

Sunday September 26

ENGLAND: The North London derby between rivals Arsenal and Tottenham kicks off at the Emirates.
MEXICO: The first *Superclasico* of the season between Club America and Guadalajara takes place.
BRAZIL: Corinthians host Palmeiras in Sao Paulo's Paulista derby.

Monday September 27

ENGLAND: Crystal Palace meet their rivals Brighton at Selhurst Park in the Premier League.

Tuesday September 28

SOUTH AMERICA: The Copa Sudamericana semi-final second legs reach their conclusion to decide November's finalists.

Wednesday September 29

SOUTH AMERICA: The Copa Libertadores finalists will also be decided as both semi-final second legs are concluded in Brazil.

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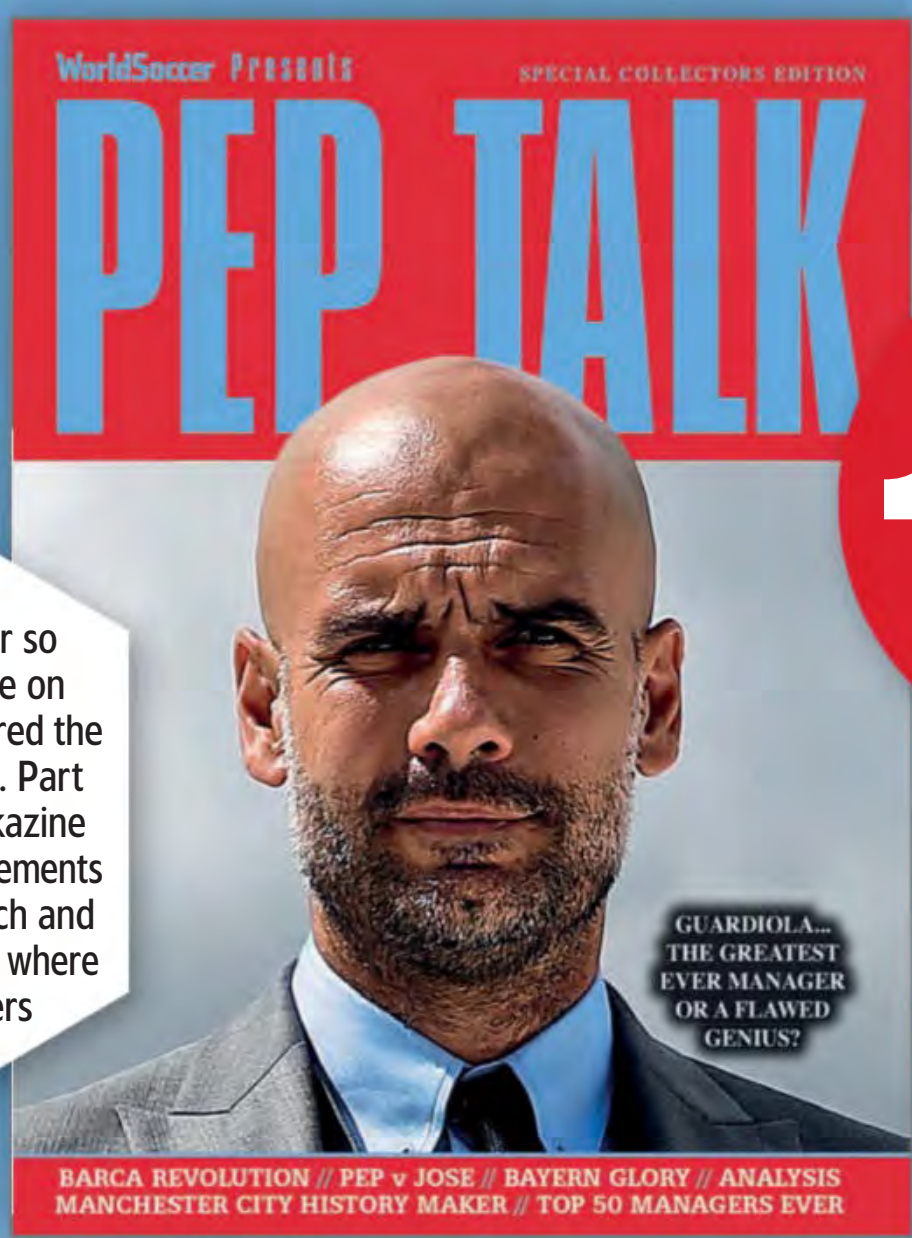

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2021 CONCACAF GOLD CUP

CANADA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Dayne **ST. CLAIR**	(24) 09.05.97	Minnesota United (USA)
16	Maxime **CREPEAU**	(27) 11.05.94	Vancouver Whitecaps
18	Jayson **LEUTWILER**	(32) 25.04.89	Huddersfield Town (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Alistair **JOHNSTON**	(22) 08.10.98	Nashville SC (USA)
4	Kamal **MILLER**	(24) 16.05.97	CF Montreal
5	Steven **VITORIA**	(34) 11.01.87	Moreirense (Por)
13	Frank **STURING**	(24) 29.05.97	Unattached
15	Doneil **HENRY**	(28) 20.04.93	Suwon Samsung Bluewings (Kor)
22	Richie **LARYEA**	(26) 07.01.95	Toronto FC
23	Cristian **GUTIERREZ**	(24)18.02.97	Vancouver Whitecaps

MIDFIELDERS

6	Samuel **PIETTE**	(26) 12.11.94	CF Montreal
7	Stephen **EUSTAQUIO**	(24) 21.12.96	Pacos Ferreira (Por)
8	Liam **FRASER**	(23) 13.02.98	Columbus Crew (USA)
14	Mark Anthony **KAYE**	(26) 02.12.94	Los Angeles FC (USA)
19	Harry **PATON**	(23) 23.05.98	Ross County (Sco)
21	Jonathan **OSORIO**	(29) 12.06.92	Toronto FC

FORWARDS

3	Tyler **PASHER**	(27) 27.04.94	Houston Dynamo (USA)
9	Lucas **CAVALLINI**	(28) 28.12.92	Vancouver Whitecaps FC
10	Junior **HOILETT**	(31) 05.06.90	Unattached
11	Theo **CORBEANU**	(19) 17.05.02	Wolves (Eng)
12	Tajon **BUCHANAN**	(22) 08.02.99	New England Revolution (USA)
17	Cyle **LARIN**	(26) 17.04.95	Besiktas (Tur)
20	Ayo **AKINOLA**	(21) 20.01.00	Toronto FC
(until 20 July)			
24	Tesho **AKINDELE**	(29) 31.03.92	Orlando City
(from 23 July)			

COACH

John **HERDMAN** (Eng)	(45) 19.07.75	

COSTA RICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Esteban **ALVARADO**	(32) 28.04.89	Herediano
18	Patrick **SEQUEIRA**	(22) 01.03.99	Real Union (Spa)
(until 21 July)			
18	Kevin **BRICENO**	(22) 21.10.91	Cartagines
(from 21 July)			
23	Leonel **MOREIRA**	(31) 02.04.90	Alajuelense

DEFENDERS

2	Yael **LOPEZ**	(22) 17.12.98	Herediano
3	Giancarlo **GONZALEZ**	(33) 08.02.88	LA Galaxy (USA)
4	Keysher **FULLER**	(26) 12.07.94	Herediano
6	Oscar **DUARTE**	(32) 03.06.89	Levante (Spa)
15	Francisco **CALVO**	(29) 08.07.92	Chicago Fire (USA)
19	Kendall **WASTON**	(33) 01.01.88	Saprissa
22	Ronald **MATARRITA**	(27) 09.07.94	FC Cincinnati (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Celso **BORGES**	(33) 27.05.88	Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)
7	Johan **VENEGAS**	(32) 27.11.88	Alajuelense
8	Luis **DIAZ**	(22) 06.12.98	Columbus Crew (USA)
10	Bryan **RUIZ**	(35) 18.08.85	Alajuelense
11	Ariel **LASSITER**	(26) 27.09.94	Houston Dynamo (USA)
13	Allan **CRUZ**	(25) 24.02.96	FC Cincinnati (USA)
14	Jimmy **MARIN**	(23) 08.10.97	Saprissa
16	Alonso **MARTINEZ**	(22) 15.10.98	Alajuelense
17	Jefferson **BRENES**	(24) 13.04.97	Herediano
20	David **GUZMAN**	(31) 18.02.90	Saprissa

FORWARDS

9	Ariel **RODRIGUEZ**	(31) 27.09.89	Saprissa
12	Joel **CAMPBELL**	(29) 26.06.92	Leon (Mex)
21	Jose Guillermo **ORTIZ**	(29) 20.06.92	Deportes Tolima (Col)

COACH

Luis **SUAREZ** (Col)	(61) 23.12.59	

EL SALVADOR

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mario **GONZALEZ**	(24) 20.05.97	Alianza
18	Oscar **PLEITEZ**	(28) 06.02.93	Isidro Metapan
22	Kevin **CARABANTES**	(26) 20.03.95	FAS

DEFENDERS

2	Julio **SIBRIAN**	(24) 17.07.96	Once Deportivo
3	Roberto **DOMINGUEZ**	(24) 09.05.97	Chalatenango
4	Eriq **ZAVALETA**	(28) 02.08.92	Toronto FC (Can)
5	Ronald **GOMEZ**	(22) 22.09.98	Aguila
13	Alexander **LARIN**	(29) 27.06.92	Xelaju MC (Gua)
16	Miguel **LEMUS**	(27) 26.10.93	Chalatenango
(from 21 July)			
19	Alexis **RENDEROS**	(23) 01.06.98	Alianza
21	Bryan **TAMACAS**	(26) 21.02.95	Alianza

MIDFIELDERS

6	Narciso **ORELLANA**	(26) 28.01.95	Alianza
7	Darwin **CEREN**	(31) 31.12.89	Houston Dynamo (USA)
10	Amando **MORENO**	(25) 10.09.95	New Mexico United (USA)
12	Marvin **MONTERROZA**	(30) 03.03.91	Alianza
15	Alex **ROLDAN**	(24) 28.07.96	Seattle Sounders (USA)
17	Jairo **HENRIQUEZ**	(27) 31.08.93	Chalatenango
20	Isaac **PORTILLO**	(26) 08.11.94	Alianza

FORWARDS

8	Joshua **PEREZ**	(23) 21.01.98	Ibiza (Spa)
9	Walmer **MARTINEZ**	(22) 17.08.98	Hartford Athletic (USA)
11	Juan Carlos **PORTILLO**	(29) 26.12.91	Alianza
14	Joaquin **RIVAS**	(29) 26.04.92	FC Tulsa (USA)
16	David **RUGAMAS**	(31) 17.02.90	Once Deportivo
(until 20 July)			
23	Marvin **MARQUEZ**	(23) 12.03.98	Isidro Metapan

COACH

Hugo **PEREZ** (USA)	(57) 08.11.63	

GRENADA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jason **BELFON**	(31) 03.07.90	Paradise
12	Reice **CHARLES-COOK**	(27) 08.04.94	Welling United (Eng)
22	Trishawn **THOMAS**	(18) 25.01.03	Queens Park Rangers SC

DEFENDERS

3	Kwesi **PAUL**	(26) 07.11.94	Peachtree City (USA)
4	Aaron **PIERRE**	(28) 17.02.93	Shrewsbury Town (Eng)
5	Omar **BECKLES**	(29) 25.10.91	Leyton Orient (Eng)
16	Arthur **PATERSON**	(25) 31.01.96	Charleston Battery (USA)
17	Tyrone **STERLING**	(33) 08.10.87	Concord Rangers (Eng)
18	Kraig **NOEL-MCLEOD**	(21) 11.12.99	Unattached

MIDFIELDERS

6	Oliver **NORBURN**	(28) 26.10.92	Shrewsbury Town (Eng)
7	Romar **FRANK**	(24) 28.09.96	Camerhogne
8	Alexander **MCQUEEN**	(26) 24.03.95	Barnet (Eng)
11	Shavon **JOHN-BROWN**	(26) 13.04.95	New Amsterdam (USA)
19	Kwazim **THEODORE**	(25) 12.01.96	St. David's FC
21	Josh **GABRIEL**	(21) 30.11.99	Unattached

FORWARDS

2	Benjamin **ETTIENNE**	(18) 13.03.03	Queens Park Rangers SC
9	Kairo **MITCHELL**	(23) 21.10.97	Chesterfield (Eng)
10	Saydrel **LEWIS**	(23) 27.11.97	Paradise
13	Regan **CHARLES-COOK**	(24) 14.02.97	Ross County (Sco)
14	Dejon **NOEL-WILLIAMS**	(22) 22.09.98	Guadalajara (Spa)
15	Ricky **GERMAN**	(22) 13.01.99	Crawley Town (Eng)
20	Jacob **BERKELEY-AGYEPONG**	(24) 27.03.97	Dartford (Eng)
23	Jamal **CHARLES**	(25) 24.11.95	Paradise

COACH

Michael **FINDLAY** (Can)	(57) 06.11.63	

GUADELOUPE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Frederic **TEJOU**	(33) 13.07.87	La Gauloise
16	Kevin **AJAX**	(33) 31.08.87	CS Moulien
23	Yohann **THURAM-ULIEN**	(32) 31.10.88	Amiens (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Kevin **MOESON**	(23) 30.09.97	Solidarite-Scolaire
3	Kelly **IREP**	(25) 01.09.95	Enonis (Cyp)
4	Ronan **HAUTERVILLE**	(31) 21.11.89	Phare Petit-Canal
5	Steve **SOLVET**	(25) 29.03.96	Sete (Fra)
12	Mickael **ALPHONSE**	(31) 12.07.89	Amiens (Fra)
17	Anthony **BARON**	(28) 29.12.92	Stade Nyonnais (Sui)
18	Thomas **PINEAU**	(30) 31.01.91	Solidarite-Scolaire
21	Colman **MAKOUKE**	(31) 07.06.90	Phare Petit-Canal

MIDFIELDERS

6	Quentin **ANNETTE**	(23) 13.01.98	Club Franciscain (Mtq)
7	Mavrick **ANNEROSE**	(25) 29.11.95	USR Saint Rose
8	Kevin **MALPON**	(25) 01.03.96	Gosier
13	Morgan **SAINT-MAXIMIN**	(23) 02.08.97	Solidarite-Scolaire
15	Dimitri **CAVARE**	(26) 05.02.95	Sion (Sui)
20	Stevenson **CASIMIR**	(29) 03.06.92	La Gauloise

FORWARDS

9	Raphael **MIRVAL**	(25) 04.05.96	Solidarite-Scolaire
10	Matthias **PHAETON**	(21) 08.01.00	Guingamp (Fra)
11	Skeveen **ROMAGE**	(23) 22.12.97	USBM
14	Vikash **TILLE**	(23) 26.11.97	CS Moulien
19	Luther **ARCHIMEDE**	(21) 17.09.99	New York Red Bulls II (USA)
22	Dimitri **RAMOTHE**	(30) 08.09.90	ACMG

COACH

Jocelyn **ANGLOMA**	(54) 07.08.65	

GUATEMALA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Nicholas **HAGEN**	(24) 02.08.96	Sabail (Aze)
12	Kenderson **NAVARRO**	(19) 25.02.02	Municipal
21	Kevin **MOSCOSO**	(28) 13.06.93	Comunicaciones

DEFENDERS

2	Moises **HERNANDEZ**	(29) 05.03.92	Antigua
3	Kervin **GARCIA**	(30) 07.12.90	Coban Imperial
4	Jose Carlos **PINTO**	(28) 16.06.93	Comunicaciones
13	Stheven **ROBLES**	(25) 12.11.95	Comunicaciones
20	Gerardo **GORDILLO**	(26) 17.08.94	UTC (Per)
22	Jose **MORALES**	(24) 03.12.96	Municipal

MIDFIELDERS

5	Rudy **BARRIENTOS**	(22) 01.03.99	Municipal
6	Oscar **CASTELLANOS**	(21) 18.01.00	Antigua
7	Marvin **CEBALLOS**	(29) 22.04.92	UdeG (Mex)
8	Luis de **LEON**	(25) 14.11.95	Municipal
9	Yeltsin **ALVAREZ**	(26) 02.11.94	Municipal
10	Alejandro **GALINDO**	(29) 05.03.92	Coban Imperial
16	Marco **DOMINGUEZ**	(25) 25.02.96	Antigua
17	Luis **MARTINEZ**	(29) 14.12.91	Guastatoya
18	Oscar **SANTIS**	(22) 25.03.99	Comunicaciones
23	Jorge **APARICIO**	(28) 21.11.92	Comunicaciones

FORWARDS

11	Jairo **ARREOLA**	(35) 20.09.85	Antigua
14	Darwin **LOM**	(23) 14.07.97	California United Strikers (USA)
15	Manuel **LOPEZ**	(31) 26.04.90	Municipal
19	Robin **BETANCOURTH**	(29) 25.11.91	Coban Imperial

COACH

Rafael **LOREDO** (Mex)	(63) 25.08.57	

HAITI

GOALKEEPERS

1	Brian **SYLVESTRE**	(28) 19.12.92	Miami FC (USA)
12	Josue **DUVERGER**	(21) 27.04.00	Vitoria Setubal (Por)
23	Isaac **ROUAUD**	(23) 12.02.98	J3S Amilly (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Carlens **ARCUS**	(25) 28.06.96	Auxerre (Fra)
3	Francois **DULYSSE**	(22) 13.04.99	New England Revolution II (USA)
4	Ricardo **ADE**	(31) 21.05.90	Mushuc Runa (Ecu)
5	Stephane **LAMBESE**	(26) 10.05.95	Orleans (Fra)
6	Jems **GEFFRARD**	(26) 26.08.94	HFX Wanderers (Can)
13	Kevin **LAFRANCE**	(31) 13.01.90	AEK Larnaca (Cyp)
17	Martin **EXPERIENCE**	(22) 09.03.99	Avranches (Fra)
22	Alex Junior **CHRISTIAN**	(28) 12.05.93	Atyrau (Kaz)

MIDFIELDERS

8	Zachary **HERIVAUX**	(25) 01.02.96	Birmingham Legion (USA)
10	Derrick **ETIENNE**	(24) 25.11.96	Columbus Crew (USA)
14	Leverton **PIERRE**	(23) 09.03.98	USL Dunkerque (Fra)
15	Dutherson **CLERVEAUX**	(22) 20.01.99	Cavaly
19	Steeven **SABA**	(28) 24.02.93	Violette
21	Bryan **ALCEUS**	(25) 01.02.96	Gaz Metan Medias (Rou)

FORWARDS

7	Carnejy **ANTOINE**	(29) 27.07.91	Orleans (Fra)
9	Duckens **NAZON**	(27) 17.04.94	Sint-Truiden (Blg)
11	Roberto **LOUIMA**	(24) 04.03.97	Violette
16	Louicius Don **DEEDSON**	(20) 11.02.01	Hobro (Den)
18	Ronaldo **DAMUS**	(21) 12.09.99	Orange County SC (USA)
20	Frantzdy **PIERROT**	(26) 29.03.95	Guingamp (Fra)

COACH

Jean-Jacques **PIERRE**	(40) 23.01.81	

HONDURAS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Edrick **MENJIVAR**	(28) 01.03.93	Olimpia
18	Marlon **LICONA**	(30) 09.02.91	Motagua
22	Luis **LOPEZ**	(27) 13.09.93	Real Espana

DEFENDERS

2	Felix **CRISANTO**	(30) 09.09.90	Unattached
3	Maynor **FIGUEROA**	(38) 02.05.83	Houston Dynamo (USA)
4	Marcelo **PEREIRA**	(26) 27.05.95	Motagua
5	Raul **SANTOS**	(28) 02.08.92	Motagua
16	Johnny **LEVERON**	(31) 07.02.90	Olimpia
17	Franklin **FLORES**	(25) 18.04.96	Real Espana
21	Kevin **ALVAREZ**	(24) 03.08.96	Norrkoping (Swe)
23	Diego **RODRIGUEZ**	(25) 06.11.95	Motagua

MIDFIELDERS

6	Bryan **ACOSTA**	(27) 24.11.93	FC Dallas (USA)
8	Walter **MARTINEZ**	(30) 26.03.91	Motagua
10	Alexander **LOPEZ**	(29) 05.06.92	Alajuelense (Crc)
13	Jhow **BENAVIDEZ**	(25) 26.12.95	Real Espana
14	Boniek **GARCIA**	(36) 04.09.84	Houston Dynamo (USA)
15	Juan **DELGADO**	(28) 21.07.92	Motagua
20	Deybi **FLORES**	(25) 16.06.96	Olimpia
25	Kevin **LOPEZ**	(25) 03.02.96	Motagua
(from 19 July)			

FORWARDS

7	Alberth **ELIS**	(25) 12.02.96	Boavista (Por)
(until 19 July)			
9	Carlos **FERNANDEZ**	(29) 17.02.92	Fenix (Uru)
(until 21 July)			
11	Jerry **BENGTSON**	(34) 08.04.87	Olimpia
12	Romell **QUIOTO**	(29) 09.08.91	CF Montreal (Can)
19	Edwin **SOLANO**	(25) 25.01.96	Marathon
24	Roger **ROJAS**	(31) 09.06.90	Cartagines
(from 21 July)			

COACH

Fabian **COITO** (Uru)	(54) 03.03.67	

JAMAICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Andre **BLAKE**	(30) 21.11.90	Philadelphia Union (USA)
13	Dillon **BARNES**	(25) 08.04.96	Queens Park Rangers (Eng)
23	Dennis **TAYLOR**	(30) 21.01.91	Humble Lions

DEFENDERS

3	Michael **HECTOR**	(28) 19.07.92	Fulham (Eng)
4	Amari'i **BELL**	(27) 05.05.94	Luton Town (Eng)
5	Alvas **POWELL**	(26) 18.07.94	Philadelphia Union (USA)
6	Liam **MOORE**	(28) 31.01.93	Reading (Eng)
8	Oniel **FISHER**	(29) 22.11.91	LA Galaxy (USA)
17	Damion **LOWE**	(28) 05.05.93	Al Ittihad (Egy)
19	Adrian **MARIAPPA**	(34) 03.10.86	Bristol City (Eng)
20	Kemar **LAWRENCE**	(28) 17.09.92	Toronto FC (Can)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Lamar **WALKER**	(21) 05.12.99	Miami FC (USA)
15	Blair **TURGOTT**	(27) 22.05.94	Östersund (Swe)
16	Daniel **JOHNSON**	(28) 08.10.92	Preston North End (Eng)
18	Ravel **MORRISON**	(28) 02.02.93	Unattached
21	Tyreek **MAGEE**	(21) 27.08.99	Eupen (Blg)
22	Devon **WILLIAMS**	(29) 08.04.92	Miami FC (USA)

FORWARDS

7	Leon **BAILEY**	(23) 09.08.97	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
9	Cory **BURKE**	(29) 28.12.91	Philadelphia Union (USA)
10	Bobby **DECORDOVA-REID**	(28) 02.02.93	Fulham (Eng)
11	Shamar **NICHOLSON**	(24) 16.02.97	Charleroi (Blg)
12	Junior **FLEMMINGS**	(25) 16.01.96	Birmingham Legion (USA)
14	Andre **GRAY**	(30) 26.06.91	Watford (Eng)

COACH

Theodore **WHITMORE**	(48) 05.08.72	

MARTINIQUE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Loic **CHAUVET**	(33) 30.04.88	Golden Lion
16	Arnaud Huyghues **DES ETAGES**	(35) 30.12.85	Aiglon
23	Gilles **MESLIEN**	(32) 17.06.89	Golden Lion

DEFENDERS

2	Florian **GOMA**	(20) 21.01.01	Samaritaine
4	Gerald **DONDON**	(34) 04.10.86	Club Franciscain
6	Jean-Sylvain **BABIN**	(34) 14.10.86	Sporting Gijon (Spa)
8	Yann **THIMON**	(31) 01.01.90	Golden Lion
15	Yordan **THIMON**	(24) 10.09.96	Club Franciscain
18	Samuel **CAMILLE**	(35) 02.02.86	Olympique Valence (Fra)
21	Sebastien **CRETINOIR**	(35) 12.02.86	Samaritaine

MIDFIELDERS

3	Ambroise **FELICITET**	(28) 29.05.93	Aiglon
5	Karl **VITULIN**	(30) 15.01.91	Samaritaine
14	Norman **GRELET**	(27) 14.07.93	Golden Lion
19	Daniel **HERELLE**	(32) 17.10.88	Samaritaine
20	Stephane **ABAUL**	(29) 23.11.91	Club Franciscain
22	Romario **BARTHELERY**	(27) 24.06.94	Golden Lion

FORWARDS

7	Gregory **PASTEL**	(30) 18.09.90	RC Riviere-Pilote
9	Enrick **REUPERNE**	(22) 03.08.98	Aiglon
10	Kevin **FORTUNE**	(31) 06.08.89	Auxerre (Fra)
11	Emmanuel **RIVIERE**	(31) 03.03.90	Crotone (Ita)
12	Johnny **MARAJO**	(27) 21.10.93	Club Franciscain
13	Christophe **JOUGON**	(26) 10.07.95	Club Franciscain
17	Patrick **BURNER**	(25) 11.04.96	Nimes (Fra)

COACH

Mario **BOCALY**	(42) 28.07.78	

MEXICO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alfredo **TALAVERA**	(38) 18.09.82	UNAM Pumas
12	Rodolfo **COTA**	(34) 03.07.87	Leon
20	Jonathan **OROZCO**	(35) 12.05.86	Tijuana

DEFENDERS

2	Nestor **ARAUJO**	(29) 29.08.91	Celta Vigo (Spa)
3	Carlos **SALCEDO**	(27) 29.09.93	Tigres UANL
4	Edson **ALVAREZ**	(23) 24.10.97	Ajax (Ned)
5	Osvaldo **RODRIGUEZ**	(24) 10.09.96	Leon
8	Kevin **ALVAREZ**	(22) 15.01.99	Pachuca
15	Hector **MORENO**	(33) 17.01.88	Monterrey
19	Gilberto **SEPULVEDA**	(22) 04.02.99	Guadalajara
21	Luis **RODRIGUEZ**	(30) 21.01.91	Tigres UANL
23	Jesus **GALLARDO**	(26) 15.08.94	Monterrey

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jonathan **DOS SANTOS**	(31) 26.04.90	LA Galaxy (USA)
7	Erick **SANCHEZ**	(21) 27.09.99	Pachuca
10	Orbelin **PINEDA**	(25) 24.04.96	Cruz Azul
13	Alan **CERVANTES**	(23) 17.01.98	Santos Laguna
14	Erick **GUTIERREZ**	(26) 15.06.95	PSV (Ned)
16	Hector **HERRERA**	(31) 19.04.90	Atletico Madrid (Spa)

FORWARDS

9	Alan **PULIDO**	(30) 08.03.91	Sporting Kansas City (USA)
11	Rogelio Funes **MORI**	(30) 05.03.91	Monterrey
17	Jesus **CORONA**	(28) 06.01.93	Porto (Por)
18	Efrain **ALVAREZ**	(19) 19.06.02	LA Galaxy (Ita)
22	Hirving **LOZANO**	(25) 30.07.95	Napoli (Ita)
(until 21 July)			
24	Rodolfo **PIZARRO**	(27) 15.02.94	Inter Miami (USA)
(from 21 July)			

COACH

Gerardo **MARTINO** (Arg)	(58) 20.11.62	

PANAMA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Luis **MEJIA**	(30) 16.03.91	Fenix (Uru)
12	Jose **CALDERON**	(35) 14.08.85	Coban Imperial (Gua)
22	Orlando **MOSQUERA**	(26) 25.12.94	Boluspor (Tur)

DEFENDERS

2	Francisco **PALACIOS**	(30) 10.12.90	San Francisco
3	Harold **CUMMINGS**	(29) 01.03.92	Always Ready (Bol)
4	Omar **CORDOBA**	(27) 13.06.94	Independiente
5	Richard **PERALTA**	(27) 20.09.93	Tauro
13	Adolfo **MACHADO**	(36) 14.02.85	San Carlos (Crc)
15	Eric **DAVIS**	(30) 31.03.91	DAC (Svk)
16	Roderick **MILLER**	(29) 03.04.92	Carlos Stein (Per)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Victor **GRIFFITH**	(20) 12.12.00	Arabe Unido
7	Jose Luis **RODRIGUEZ**	(23) 19.06.98	Lugo (Spa)
8	Adalberto **CARRASQUILLA**	(22) 28.11.98	Cartagena (Spa)
10	Edgar **BARCENAS**	(27) 23.10.93	Girona (Spa)
11	Armando **COOPER**	(33) 26.11.87	Maccabi Petah Tikva (Isr)
19	Alberto **QUINTERO**	(33) 18.12.87	Universitario (Per)
20	Abdiel **AYARZA**	(28) 12.09.92	Cienciano (Per)
21	Cesar **YANIS**	(25) 28.01.96	Deportivo del Este
23	Miguel **CAMARGO**	(27) 05.09.93	Independiente Medellin (Col)

FORWARDS

9	Gabriel **TORRES**	(32) 31.10.88	UNAM Pumas (Mex)
14	Rolando **BLACKBURN**	(30) 09.01.90	The Strongest (Bol)
17	Jose **FAJARDO**	(27) 18.08.93	9 de Octubre (Ecu)
18	Jorman **AGUILAR**	(26) 11.09.94	San Carlos (Crc)

COACH

Thomas **CHRISTIANSEN** (Spa)	(58) 20.11.62	

QATAR

GOALKEEPERS

1	Saad **AL SHEEB**	(31) 19.02.90	Al Sadd
21	Yousef **HASSAN**	(25) 24.05.96	Al Gharafa
22	Meshaal **BARSHAM**	(23) 14.02.98	Al Sadd

DEFENDERS

2	**RO-RO**	(30) 06.08.90	Al Sadd
3	Abdelkarim **HASSAN**	(27) 28.08.93	Al Sadd
5	Tarek **SALMAN**	(23) 05.12.97	Al Sadd
8	Ahmed **SUHAIL**	(22) 08.02.99	Al Sadd
13	Musab **KHEDER**	(27) 26.09.93	Al Sadd
14	Homam **AHMED**	(21) 25.08.99	Al Gharafa
15	Bassam **AL RAWI**	(23) 16.12.97	Al Duhail
16	Boualem **KHOUKHI**	(30) 07.09.90	Al Sadd

MIDFIELDERS

6	Abdulaziz **HATEM**	(30) 28.10.90	Al Rayyan
11	Akram **AFIF**	(24) 18.11.96	Al Sadd
12	Karim **BOUDIAF**	(30) 16.09.90	Al Duhail
20	Abdullah **AL AHRAK**	(24) 10.05.97	Al Duhail
23	Assim **MADIBO**	(24) 22.10.96	Al Duhail

FORWARDS

4	Mohammed **WAAD**	(21) 18.09.99	Al Sadd
7	Ahmed **ALAAELDIN**	(28) 31.01.93	Al Gharafa
9	Mohammed **MUNTARI**	(27) 20.12.93	Al Duhail
10	Hassan **AL HAYDOS**	(30) 11.12.90	Al Sadd
17	Ismaeel **MOHAMMAD**	(31) 05.04.90	Al Duhail
18	Yusuf **ABDURISAG**	(21) 06.08.99	Al Sadd
19	Almoez **ALI**	(24) 19.08.96	Al Duhail

COACH

Felix **SANCHEZ** (Spa)	(45) 13.12.75	

SURINAME

GOALKEEPERS

1	Warner **HAHN**	(29) 15.06.92	Unattached
13	Claidel **KOHINOR**	(29) 07.02.92	Robinhood
23	Ishan **KORT**	(21) 01.06.00	Almere U21 (Ned)

DEFENDERS

2	Damil **DANKERLUI**	(24) 24.08.96	Groningen (Ned)
3	Sean **KLAIBER**	(26) 31.07.94	Ajax (Ned)
4	Dion **MALONE**	(32) 13.02.89	NAC Breda (Ned)
5	Ridgeciano **HAPS**	(28) 12.06.93	Feyenoord (Ned)
12	Albert **NIBTE**	(28) 20.05.93	Leo Victor
14	Sersinho **EDUARD**	(26) 04.09.94	Inter Moengotapoe
15	Ryan **DONK**	(35) 30.03.86	Galatasaray (Tur)
19	Anduelo **AMOEFERIE**	(29) 24.09.91	Inter Moengotapoe

MIDFIELDERS

6	Ryan **KOOLWIJK**	(35) 08.08.85	Almere City (Ned)
8	Roland **ALBERG**	(30) 06.08.90	Hyderabad (Ind)
16	Mitchell **DONALD**	(32) 10.12.88	Erzurumspor (Tur)
18	Kelvin **LEERDAM**	(31) 24.06.90	Inter Miami (USA)
21	Diego **BISESWAR**	(33) 08.03.88	Apollon Limassol (Cyp)

FORWARDS

7	Florian **JOZEFZOON**	(30) 09.02.91	Rotherham United (Eng)
9	Nigel **HASSELBAINK**	(30) 21.11.90	Bnei Sakhnin (Isr)
10	Alvaro **VERWEY**	(22) 12.01.99	Transvaal
11	Sheraldo **BECKER**	(26) 09.02.95	Union Berlin (Ger)
17	Dimitrie **APAI**	(26) 19.07.94	W Connection (Tri)
20	Gleofilo **VLIJTER**	(21) 17.09.99	Beitar Jerusalem (Isr)
22	Ivenzo **COMVALIUS**	(24) 24.06.97	Dugopolje (Cro)

COACH

Dean **GORRE**	(50) 10.09.70	

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marvin **PHILLIP**	(36) 01.08.84	Unattached
21	Nicklas **FRENDERUP**	(28) 14.12.92	Ranheim (Nor)
22	Adrian **FONCETTE**	(32) 10.10.88	Police

DEFENDERS

2	Aubrey **DAVID**	(30) 11.10.90	Saprissa (Crc)
4	Jelani **PETERS**	(27) 17.12.93	Pittsburgh Riverhounds (USA)
5	Curtis **GONZALES**	(32) 26.01.89	Defence Force
6	Radanfah **ABU BAKR**	(34) 12.02.87	Unattached
11	Noah **POWDER**	(22) 27.10.98	Real Salt Lake (USA)
15	Neveal **HACKSHAW**	(25) 21.11.95	Indy Eleven (USA)
16	Alvin **JONES**	(27) 09.07.94	Unattached
17	Justin **GARCIA**	(25) 26.10.95	Defence Force
18	Tristan **HODGE**	(26) 09.10.94	Colorado Springs Switchbacks (USA)
19	Ross **RUSSELL**	(28) 09.09.92	La Horquetta Rangers
23	Jesse **WILLIAMS**	(20) 18.05.01	Unattached

MIDFIELDERS

3	Hashim **ARCIA**	(32) 08.10.88	Defence Force
8	Mekeil **WILLIAMS**	(30) 24.07.90	Pittsburgh Riverhounds (USA)
10	Kevin **MOLINO**	(31) 17.06.90	Columbus Crew (USA)
13	Reon **MOORE**	(24) 22.09.96	Defence Force
14	Andre **FORTUNE II**	(25) 03.07.96	Memphis 901 (USA)
20	Duane **MUCKETTE**	(26) 01.07.95	Unattached

FORWARDS

7	Ryan **TELFER**	(27) 04.03.94	Atletico Ottawa (Can)
9	Marcus **JOSEPH**	(30) 29.04.91	Mohammedan SC (Ind)
12	Isaiah **LEE**	(21) 21.09.99	La Horquetta Rangers

COACH

Angus **EVE**	(49) 23.02.72	

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Matt **TURNER**	(27) 24.06.94	New England Revolution
18	Sean **JOHNSON**	(32) 31.05.89	New York City FC
22	Brad **GUZAN**	(36) 09.09.84	Atlanta United

DEFENDERS

2	Reggie **CANNON**	(23) 11.06.98	Boavista (Por)
3	Sam **VINES**	(22) 31.05.99	Colorado Rapids
4	Donovan **PINES**	(23) 07.03.98	D.C. United
5	Walker **ZIMMERMAN**	(28) 19.05.93	Nashville SC
(until 20 July)			
12	Miles **ROBINSON**	(24) 14.03.97	Atlanta United
16	James **SANDS**	(21) 06.07.00	New York City FC
20	Shaq **MOORE**	(24) 02.11.96	Tenerife (Spa)
21	George **BELLO**	(19) 22.01.02	Atlanta United
24	Henry **KESSLER**	(23) 25.06.98	New England Revolution
(from 24 JULY)			

MIDFIELDERS

6	Gianluca **BUSIO**	(19) 29.05.02	Sporting Kansas City
10	Cristian **ROLDAN**	(26) 03.06.95	Seattle Sounders
14	Jackson **YUEILL**	(24) 19.03.97	San Jose Earthquakes
17	Sebastian **LLETGET**	(28) 03.09.92	LA Galaxy
19	Eryk **WILLIAMSON**	(24) 11.06.97	Portland Timbers
23	Kellyn **ACOSTA**	(25) 24.07.95	Colorado Rapids

FORWARDS

7	Paul **ARRIOLA**	(26) 05.02.95	D.C. United
8	Nicholas **GIOACCHINI**	(20) 25.07.00	Caen (Fra)
9	Gyasi **ZARDES**	(29) 02.09.91	Columbus Crew
11	Daryl **DIKE**	(21) 03.06.00	Orlando City SC
13	Matthew **HOPPE**	(20) 13.03.01	Schalke (Ger)
15	Jonathan **LEWIS**	(24) 04.06.97	Colorado Rapids

COACH

Gregg **BERHALTER**	(47) 01.08.73	

(ages and clubs as of 10.07.21)

TOKYO 2020 OLYMPICS MEN

ARGENTINA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jeremias **LEDESMA***	(28) 13.02.93	Cadiz (Spa)
12	Lautaro **MORALES**	(21) 16.12.99	Lanus
22	Joaquin **BLAZQUEZ**	(20) 28.01.01	Talleres

DEFENDERS

2	Nehuen **PEREZ**	(21) 24.06.00	Granada (Spa)
3	Claudio **BRAVO**	(24) 13.03.97	Portland Timbers (USA)
4	Hernan **DE LA FUENTE**	(24) 07.01.97	Velez Sarsfield
6	Leonel **MOSEVICH**	(24) 04.02.97	Vizela (Por)
13	Marcelo **HERRERA**	(22) 03.11.98	San Lorenzo
14	Facundo **MEDINA**	(22) 28.05.99	Lens (Fra)
19	Francisco **ORTEGA**	(22) 19.03.99	Velez Sarsfield

MIDFIELDERS

5	Fausto **VERA**	(21) 26.03.00	Argentinos Juniors
7	Agustin **URZI**	(21) 04.05.00	Banfield
8	Santiago **COLOMBATTO**	(24) 17.01.97	Leon (Mex)
10	Alexis **MAC ALLISTER**	(22) 24.12.98	Brighton (Eng)
11	Ezequiel **BARCO**	(22) 29.03.99	Atlanta United (USA)
16	Martin **PAYERO**	(22) 11.09.98	Banfield
17	Tomas **BELMONTE**	(23) 27.05.98	Lanus
20	Thiago **ALMADA**	(20) 26.04.01	Velez Sarsfield
21	Carlos **VALENZUELA**	(24) 22.04.97	Famalicao (Por)

FORWARDS

9	Adolfo **GAICH**	(22) 26.02.99	Benevento (Ita)
15	Pedro **DE LA VEGA**	(20) 07.02.01	Lanus
18	Ezequiel **PONCE**	(24) 29.03.97	Spartak Moscow (Rus)

COACH

Fernando **BATISTA**	(50) 20.08.70	

AUSTRALIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Tom **GLOVER**	(23) 24.12.97	Melbourne City
18	Ashley **MAYNARD-BREWER**	(22) 25.06.99	Charlton Athletic (Eng)
22	Jordan **HOLMES**	(24) 08.05.97	Ebbsfleet United (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Nathaniel **ATKINSON**	(22) 13.06.99	Melbourne City
3	Kye **ROWLES**	(23) 24.06.98	Central Coast Mariners
4	Jay **RICH-BAGHUELOU**	(21) 22.10.99	Crystal Palace (Eng)
5	Harry **SOUTTAR**	(22) 22.10.98	Stoke City (Eng)
13	Dylan **PIERIAS**	(21) 20.02.00	Western United
14	Thomas **DENG**	(24) 20.03.97	Urawa Red Diamonds (Jpn)
16	Joel **KING**	(20) 30.10.00	Sydney

MIDFIELDERS

6	Keanu **BACCUS**	(23) 07.06.98	Western Sydney Wanderers
8	Riley **MCGREE**	(22) 02.11.98	Birmingham City (Eng)
10	Denis **GENREAU**	(22) 21.05.99	Macarthur
15	Caleb **WATTS**	(19) 16.01.02	Southampton (Eng)
17	Connor **METCALFE**	(21) 05.11.99	Melbourne City
21	Cameron **DEVLIN**	(23) 07.06.98	Wellington Phoenix (Nzl)

FORWARDS

7	Reno **PISCOPO**	(23) 27.05.98	Wellington Phoenix (Nzl)
9	Nicholas **D'AGOSTINO**	(23) 25.02.98	Perth Glory
11	Daniel **ARZANI**	(22) 04.01.99	AGF (Den)
12	Mitchell **DUKE***	(30) 18.01.91	Western Sydney Wanderers
19	Marco **TILIO**	(19) 23.08.01	Melbourne City
20	Lachlan **WALES**	(23) 19.10.97	Western United

COACH

Graham **ARNOLD**	(57) 03.08.63	

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS

1	**SANTOS***	(31) 17.03.90	Athletico Paranaense
12	**BRENNO**	(22) 01.04.99	Gremio
22	**LUCAO**	(20) 26.02.01	Vasco da Gama

DEFENDERS

3	Diego **CARLOS***	(28) 15.03.93	Sevilla (Spa)
4	Ricardo **GRACA**	(24) 16.02.97	Vasco da Gama
6	Guilherme **ARANA**	(24) 14.04.97	Atletico Mineiro
13	Dani **ALVES***	(38) 06.05.83	Sao Paulo
14	Bruno **FUCHS**	(22) 01.04.99	CSKA Moscow (Rus)
15	**NINO**	(24) 10.04.97	Fluminense
16	**ABNER**	(21) 27.05.00	Athletico Paranaense

MIDFIELDERS

2	Gabriel **MENINO**	(20) 29.09.00	Palmeiras
5	Douglas **LUIZ**	(23) 09.05.98	Aston Villa (Eng)
8	Bruno **GUIMARAES**	(23) 16.11.97	Lyon (Fra)
18	Matheus **HENRIQUE**	(23) 19.12.97	Gremio
19	**REINIER**	(19) 19.01.02	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
20	**CLAUDINHO**	(24) 28.01.97	Red Bull Bragantino

FORWARDS

7	**PAULINHO**	(21) 15.07.00	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)
9	Matheus **CUNHA**	(22) 27.05.99	Hertha Berlin (Ger)
10	**RICHARLISON**	(24) 10.05.97	Everton (Eng)
11	**ANTONY**	(21) 24.02.00	Ajax (Ned)
17	**MALCOM**	(24) 26.02.97	Zenit (Rus)
21	Gabriel **MARTINELLI**	(20) 18.06.01	Arsenal (Eng)

COACH

Andre **JARDINE**	(41) 08.09.79	

EGYPT

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mohamed **EL SHENAWY***	(32) 18.12.88	Al Ahly
16	Mahmoud **GAD**	(22) 01.10.98	ENPPI
22	Mohamed **SOBHY**	(22) 15.07.99	Al Ittihad

DEFENDERS

4	Osama **GALAL**	(23) 17.09.97	Pyramids
5	Mohamed **ABDEL SALAM**	(23) 01.10.97	Zamalek
6	Ahmed **HEGAZI***	(30) 25.01.91	Al Ittihad (Ksa)
17	Ahmed **RAMADAN**	(24) 23.03.97	Al Ahly
18	Mahmoud **HAMDY***	(26) 01.06.95	Zamalek

MIDFIELDERS

2	Amar **HAMDY**	(21) 26.11.99	Al Ittihad
3	Karim **FOUAD**	(20) 01.10.99	ENPPI
8	Nasser **MAHER**	(24) 08.02.97	Al Ahly
12	Akram **TAWFIK**	(23) 08.11.97	Al Ahly
13	Karim **EL ERAKI**	(22) 29.11.97	Al Masry
15	Emam **ASHOUR**	(23) 20.02.98	Zamalek
20	Ahmed Abou **EL FOTOUH**	(22) 22.03.98	Zamalek

FORWARDS

7	Salah **MOHSEN**	(22) 01.09.98	Al Ahly
9	Taher **MOHAMED**	(24) 07.03.97	Al Ahly
10	Ramadan **SOBHI**	(24) 23.01.97	Pyramids
11	Ibrahim **ADEL**	(20) 23.04.01	Pyramids
14	Ahmed Yasser **RAYYAN**	(23) 24.01.98	Ceramica Cleopatra
19	Abdel Rahman **MAGDY**	(23) 12.09.97	Ismaily
21	Nasser **MANSI**	(23) 16.11.97	Tala'ea El Gaish

COACH

Shawky **GHARIEB**	(62) 26.02.59	

FRANCE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Paul **BERNARDONI**	(24) 18.04.97	Angers
16	Stefan **BAJIC**	(19) 23.12.01	Saint-Etienne
22	Dimitry **BERTAUD**	(23) 06.06.98	Montpellier

DEFENDERS

2	Pierre **KALULU**	(21) 05.06.00	Milan (Ita)
3	Melvin **BARD**	(20) 06.11.00	Lyon
4	Timothee **PEMBELE**	(18) 09.09.02	Paris Saint-Germain
5	Niels **NKOUNKOU**	(20) 01.11.00	Everton (Eng)
13	Clement **MICHELIN**	(24) 11.05.97	Lens
15	Modibo **SAGNAN**	(22) 14.04.99	Real Sociedad (Spa)
17	Anthony **CACI**	(24) 01.07.97	Strasbourg
19	Ismael **DOUKOURE**	(17) 24.07.03	Valenciennes

MIDFIELDERS

6	Lucas **TOUSART**	(24) 29.04.97	Hertha Berlin (Ger)
8	Enzo **LE FEE**	(21) 03.02.00	Lorient
11	Teji **SAVANIER***	(29) 22.12.91	Montpellier
12	Alexis **BEKA BEKA**	(20) 29.03.01	Caen

FORWARDS

7	Arnaud **NORDIN**	(23) 17.06.98	Saint-Etienne
9	Nathanael **MBUKU**	(19) 16.03.02	Reims
10	Andre-Pierre **GIGNAC***	(35) 05.12.85	Tigres UANL (Mex)
14	Florian **THAUVIN***	(28) 26.01.93	Tigres UANL (Mex)
18	Randal **KOLO MUANI**	(22) 05.12.98	Nantes
20	Isaac **LIHADJI**	(19) 04.04.02	Lille

COACH

Sylvain **RIPOLI**	(49) 15.08.71	

GERMANY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Florian **MULLER**	(23) 13.11.97	Stuttgart
12	Svend **BRODERSEN**	(24) 22.03.97	Yokohama FC (Jpn)
22	Luca **PLOGMANN**	(21) 10.03.00	Werder Bremen

DEFENDERS

2	Benjamin **HENRICHS**	(24) 23.02.97	RB Leipzig
3	David **RAUM**	(23) 22.04.98	Greuther Furth
4	Felix **UDUOKHAI**	(23) 09.09.97	Augsburg
5	Amos **PIEPER**	(23) 17.01.98	Arminia Bielefeld
15	Jordan **TORUNARIGHA**	(23) 07.08.97	Hertha Berlin
16	Keven **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(24) 28.04.97	Freiburg

MIDFIELDERS

6	Ragnar **ACHE**	(22) 28.07.98	Eintracht Frankfurt
8	Maximilian **ARNOLD***	(27) 27.05.94	Wolfsburg
11	Nadiem **AMIRI***	(24) 27.10.96	Bayer Leverkusen
13	Arne **MAIER**	(22) 08.01.99	Arminia Bielefeld
14	Ismail **JAKOBS**	(21) 17.08.99	Monaco (Fra)
17	Anton **STACH**	(22) 15.11.98	Greuther Furth
18	Eduard **LOWEN**	(24) 28.01.97	Augsburg

FORWARDS

7	Marco **RICHTER**	(23) 24.11.97	Augsburg
9	Cedric **TEUCHERT**	(24) 14.01.97	Union Berlin
10	Max **KRUSE***	(33) 19.03.88	Union Berlin

COACH

Stefan **KUNTZ**	(58) 30.11.62	

HONDURAS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alex **GUITY**	(23) 20.09.97	Olimpia
12	Michael **PERELLO**	(23) 11.07.98	Real Espana
22	Bryan **RAMOS**	(19) 08.08.01	Real Espana

DEFENDERS

2	Denil **MALDONADO**	(23) 26.05.98	Everton (Chi)
3	Wesly **DECAS**	(21) 11.08.99	Motagua
4	Carlos **MELENDEZ**	(23) 08.12.97	Vida
5	Cristopher **MELENDEZ**	(23) 25.11.97	Motagua
16	Jose **GARCIA**	(22) 21.09.98	Olimpia
21	Elvin **OLIVA**	(23) 24.10.97	Olimpia

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jonathan **NUNEZ**	(19) 26.11.01	Motagua
7	Jose Alejandro **REYES**	(23) 05.11.97	Real Espana
8	Edwin **RODRIGUEZ**	(21) 25.09.99	Olimpia
11	Samuel **ELVIR**	(20) 25.04.01	UPNFM
15	Carlos **PINEDA**	(23) 23.09.97	Olimpia
20	Jorge **ALVAREZ**	(23) 28.01.98	Olimpia

FORWARDS

9	Jorge **BENGUCHE***	(25) 21.05.96	Boavista (Por)
10	Rigoberto **RIVAS**	(22) 31.07.98	Reggina (Ita)
13	Brayan **MOYA***	(28) 19.10.92	Angola 1º de Agosto (Ang)
14	Jose **PINTO**	(23) 27.09.97	Olimpia
17	Luis **PALMA**	(21) 17.01.00	Vida
18	Juan **OBREGON JR.**	(23) 29.10.97	Hartford Athletic (USA)
19	Douglas **MARTINEZ**	(24) 05.06.97	Real Salt Lake (USA)

COACH

Miguel **FALERA** (Uru)	(64) 17.05.57	

IVORY COAST

GOALKEEPERS

1	Maxime **NAGOLI**	(20) 20.12.00	Sol
16	Ira Eliezer **TAPE**	(23) 31.08.97	San Pedro
22	Nicolas **TIE**	(20) 13.02.01	Vitoria Guimaraes (Por)

DEFENDERS

2	Silas **GNAKA**	(22) 18.12.98	Eupen (Blg)
3	Eric **BAILLY***	(27) 12.04.94	Manchester United (Eng)
4	Kouadio-Yves **DABILA**	(24) 01.01.97	Mouscron (Blg)
5	Ismael **DIALLO**	(24) 29.01.97	Ajaccio (Fra)
6	Wilfried **SINGO**	(20) 25.12.00	Torino (Ita)
17	Zie **OUATTARA**	(21) 09.01.00	Vitoria Guimaraes (Por)
19	Koffi **KOUAO**	(23) 20.05.98	Vizela (Por)

MIDFIELDERS

7	Idrissa **DOUMBIA**	(23) 14.04.98	Huesca (Spa)
8	Franck **KESSIE***	(24) 19.12.96	Milan (Ita)
12	Eboue **KOUASSI**	(23) 13.12.97	Genk (Blg)
18	Cheick **TIMITE**	(23) 20.11.97	Amiens (Fra)

FORWARDS

9	Youssouf **DAO**	(23) 05.03.98	Sparta Prague (Cze)
10	Amad **DIALLO**	(19) 11.07.02	Manchester United (Eng)
11	Christian **KOUAME**	(23) 06.12.97	Fiorentina (Ita)
13	Kader **KEITA**	(20) 06.11.00	Westerlo (Blg)
14	Parfait **GUIAGON**	(20) 22.02.01	Beitar Tel Aviv (Isr)
15	Max **GRADEL***	(33) 30.11.87	Sivasspor (Tur)
20	Aboubacar **DOUMBIA**	(21) 12.11.99	Maccabi Netanya (Isr)

COACH

Soualiho **HAIDARA**	(46) 30.12.74	

JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Keisuke **OSAKO**	(21) 28.07.99	Sanfrecce Hiroshima
12	Kosei **TANI**	(20) 22.11.00	Shonan Bellmare
22	Zion **SUZUKI**	(18) 21.08.02	Urawa Red Diamonds

DEFENDERS

2	Hiroki **SAKAI***	(31) 12.04.90	Urawa Red Diamonds
3	Yuta **NAKAYAMA**	(24) 16.02.97	PEC Zwolle (Ned)
4	Ko **ITAKURA**	(24) 27.01.97	Groningen (Ned)
5	Maya **YOSHIDA***	(32) 24.08.88	Sampdoria (Ita)
13	Reo **HATATE**	(23) 21.11.97	Kawasaki Frontale
14	Takehiro **TOMIYASU**	(22) 05.11.98	Bologna (Fra)
15	Daiki **HASHIOKA**	(22) 17.05.99	Sint-Truiden (Blg)
20	Koki **MACHIDA**	(23) 25.08.97	Kashima Antlers
21	Ayumu **SEKO**	(21) 07.06.00	Cerezo Osaka

MIDFIELDERS

6	Wataru **ENDO***	(28) 09.02.93	Stuttgart (Ger)
7	Takefusa **KUBO**	(20) 04.06.01	Getafe (Spa)
8	Koji **MIYOSHI**	(24) 26.03.97	Antwerp (Blg)
10	Ritsu **DOAN**	(23) 16.06.98	PSV (Ned)
11	Kaoru **MITOMA**	(24) 20.05.97	Kawasaki Frontale
16	Yuki **SOMA**	(24) 25.02.97	Nagoya Grampus
17	Ao **TANAKA**	(22) 10.09.98	Kawasaki Frontale

FORWARDS

9	Daizen **MAEDA**	(23) 20.10.97	Yokohama F. Marinos
18	Ayase **UEDA**	(22) 28.08.98	Kashima Antlers
19	Daichi **HAYASHI**	(24) 23.05.97	Sagan Tosu

COACH

Hajime **MORIYASU**	(52) 23.08.68	

MEXICO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Luis **MALAGON**	(24) 02.03.97	Necaxa
13	Guillermo **OCHOA***	(36) 13.07.85	Club América
22	Sebastian **JURADO**	(23) 28.09.97	Cruz Azul

DEFENDERS

2	Jorge **SANCHEZ**	(23) 10.12.97	Club America
3	Cesar **MONTES**	(24) 24.02.97	Monterrey
4	Jesus Alberto **ANGULO**	(23) 30.01.98	Atlas
5	Johan **VASQUEZ**	(21) 22.10.98	UNAM Pumas
6	Vladimir **LORONA**	(22) 16.11.98	Tijuana
12	Adrian **MORA**	(23) 15.08.97	Juarez
14	Erick **AGUIRRE**	(24) 23.02.97	Pachuca

MIDFIELDERS

7	Luis **ROMO***	(26) 05.06.95	Cruz Azul
8	Carlos **RODRIGUEZ**	(24) 03.01.97	Monterrey
16	Jose Joaquin **ESQUIVEL**	(23) 07.01.98	Juarez
17	Sebastian **CORDOVA**	(24) 12.06.97	Club America
20	Fernando **BELTRAN**	(23) 08.05.98	Guadalajara

FORWARDS

9	Henry **MARTIN***	(28) 18.11.92	Club America
10	Diego **LAINEZ**	(21) 09.06.00	Real Betis (Spa)
11	Alexis **VEGA**	(23) 25.11.97	Guadalajara
15	Uriel **ANTUNA**	(23) 21.08.97	Guadalajara
18	Eduardo **AGUIRRE**	(22) 03.08.98	Santos Laguna
19	Ricardo **ANGULO**	(24) 20.02.97	Guadalajara
21	Roberto **ALVARADO**	(22) 07.09.98	Cruz Azul

COACH

Jaime **LOZANO**	(42) 29.09.78	

NEW ZEALAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Michael **WOUD**	(22) 16.01.99	Almere City (Ned)
13	Jamie **SEARLE**	(20) 25.11.00	Swansea City (Wal)
22	Alex **PAULSEN**	(19) 04.07.02	Lower Hutt City

DEFENDERS

2	Winston **REID***	(33) 03.07.88	Brentford (Eng)
3	Liberato **CACACE**	(20) 27.09.00	Sint-Truiden (Blg)
4	Nando **PIJNAKER**	(22) 25.02.99	Rio Ave (Por)
5	Michael **BOXALL***	(32) 18.08.88	Minnesota United (USA)
14	George **STANGER**	(20) 15.08.00	Hamilton Academical (Sco)
15	Dane **INGHAM**	(22) 08.06.99	Perth Glory (Aus)
17	Callan **ELLIOT**	(22) 07.07.99	Xanthi (Gre)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Clayton **LEWIS**	(24) 12.02.97	Wellington Phoenix
8	Joe **BELL**	(22) 27.04.99	Viking (Nor)
10	Marko **STAMENIC**	(19) 19.02.02	Copenhagen (Den)
16	Gianni **STENSNESS**	(22) 07.02.99	Central Coast Mariners (Aus)
20	Sam **SUTTON**	(19) 10.12.01	Wellington Phoenix
21	Ben **OLD**	(18) 13.08.02	Lower Hutt City

FORWARDS

7	Elijah **JUST**	(21) 01.05.00	Helsingor (Den)
9	Chris **WOOD***	(29) 07.12.91	Burnley (Eng)
11	Joe **CHAMPNESS**	(24) 27.04.97	Brisbane Roar (Aus)
12	Callum **MCCOWATT**	(22) 30.04.99	Helsingor (Den)
18	Ben **WAINE**	(20) 11.06.01	Wellington Phoenix
19	Matthew **GARBETT**	(19) 13.04.02	Falkenbergs (Swe)

COACH

Danny **HAY**	(46) 15.05.75	

ROMANIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mihai **POPA**	(20) 12.10.00	Astra Giurgiu
12	Mihai **AIOANI**	(21) 07.11.99	Farul Constanta
22	Stefan **TARNOVANU**	(21) 09.05.00	FCSB

DEFENDERS

2	Radu **BOBOC**	(22) 24.04.99	Farul Constanta
3	Florin **STEFAN***	(25) 09.05.96	Unattached
4	Alex **PASCANU**	(22) 28.09.98	Ponferradina (Spa)
6	Virgil **GHITA**	(23) 04.06.98	Farul Constanta
14	Andrei **RATIU**	(23) 20.06.98	Villarreal (Spa)
15	Andrei **CHINDRIS**	(22) 12.01.99	Botosani
17	Ricardo **GRIGORE**	(22) 07.04.99	Dinamo Bucharest

MIDFIELDERS

5	Tudor **BALUTA**	(22) 27.03.99	Brighton (Eng)
7	Ion **GHEORGHE**	(21) 08.10.99	Voluntari
8	Marius **MARIN**	(22) 30.08.98	Pisa (Ita)
10	Andrei **CIOBANU**	(23) 18.01.98	Farul Constanta
13	Eduard **FLORESCU**	(24) 27.06.97	Botosani
16	Ronaldo **DEACONU**	(23) 20.06.97	Gaz Metan
18	Marco **DULCA**	(22) 11.05.99	Chindia Targoviste
20	Alex **DOBRE**	(22) 30.08.98	Dijon (Fra)
21	Antonio **SEFER**	(21) 22.04.00	Rapid Bucharest

FORWARDS

9	George **GANEA**	(22) 26.05.99	Farul Constanta
11	Valentin **GHEORGHE**	(24) 14.02.97	Astra Giurgiu
19	Andrei **SINTEAN**	(22) 16.06.99	Hermannstadt

COACH

Mirel **RADOI**	(40) 22.03.81	

SAUDI ARABIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Amin **BUKHARI**	(24) 02.05.97	Al Ain
12	Mohammed **AL RUBAIE**	(23) 14.08.97	Al Ahli
22	Zaid **AL BAWARDI**	(24) 26.01.97	Al Shabab

DEFENDERS

2	Saud **ABDULHAMID**	(22) 18.07.99	Al Ittihad
3	Hamad **AL YAMI**	(22) 17.05.99	Al Qadsiah
4	Abdulbasit **HINDI**	(24) 02.02.97	Al Ahli
5	Abdulelah **AL AMRI**	(24) 15.01.97	Al Nassr
13	Yasser **AL SHAHRANI***	(29) 25.05.92	Al Hilal
16	Khalifah **AL DAWSARI**	(22) 02.01.99	Al Qadsiah
21	Abdullah **HASSOUN**	(24) 19.03.97	Al Ahli

MIDFIELDERS

6	Sami **AL NAJEI**	(24) 07.02.97	Al Nassr
7	Salman **AL FARAJ***	(31) 01.08.89	Al Hilal
8	Nasser **AL OMRAN**	(24) 13.07.97	Al Shabab
10	Salem **AL DAWSARI***	(29) 19.08.91	Al Hilal
11	Khalid **AL GHANNAM**	(20) 07.11.00	Al Nassr
14	Ali **AL HASSAN**	(24) 04.03.97	Al Nassr
15	Ayman **YAHYA**	(20) 14.05.01	Al Nassr
17	Ayman **AL KHULAIF**	(24) 22.05.97	Al Wehda
18	Abdulrahman **GHAREEB**	(24) 31.03.97	Al Ahli
20	Mukhtar **ALI**	(23) 30.10.97	Al Nassr

FORWARDS

9	Abdullah **AL HAMDAN**	(21) 13.09.99	Al Hilal
19	Firas **AL BURAIKAN**	(21) 14.05.00	Al Nassr

COACH

Saad **AL SHEHRI**	(41) 09.01.80	

SOUTH AFRICA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ronwen **WILLIAMS***	(29) 21.01.92	SuperSport United
16	Mondli **MPOTO**	(22) 24.07.98	Bloemfontein Celtic
22	Sifiso **MLUNGWANA**	(24) 27.04.97	Lamontville Golden Arrows

DEFENDERS

2	James **MONYANE**	(21) 30.04.00	Orlando Pirates
3	Katlego **MOHAMME**	(23) 10.03.98	University of Pretoria
5	Luke **FLEURS**	(21) 03.03.00	SuperSport United
14	Sibusiso **MABILISO**	(22) 14.04.99	AmaZulu
15	Tercious **MALEPE**	(24) 18.02.97	Mynai (Ukr)
17	Thendo **MUKUMELA**	(23) 30.01.98	Cape Town Spurs

MIDFIELDERS

4	Teboho **MOKOENA**	(24) 24.01.97	SuperSport United
6	Kamohelo **MAHLATSI**	(22) 23.08.98	Moroka Swallows
7	Nkosingiphile **NGCOBO**	(21) 16.11.99	Kaizer Chiefs
8	Thabo **CELE**	(24) 15.01.97	Portugal Cova Piedade
12	Goodman **MOSELE**	(21) 18.11.99	Baroka
13	Reeve **FROSLER**	(23) 11.01.98	Kaizer Chiefs

FORWARDS

9	Evidence **MAKGOPA**	(21) 05.06.00	Baroka
10	Luther **SINGH**	(23) 05.08.97	Pacos de Ferreira (Por)
11	MacBeth **MAHLANGU**	(19) 11.10.01	TS Galaxy
18	Kobamelo **KODISANG**	(21) 28.08.99	Braga (Por)

COACH

David **NOTOANE**	(52) 07.02.69	

SOUTH KOREA

GOALKEEPERS

1	**SONG** Bum-keun	(23) 15.10.97	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
18	**AHN** Joon-soo	(23) 28.01.98	Busan IPark
22	**AN** Chan-gi	(23) 06.04.98	Suwon Samsung Bluewings

DEFENDERS

2	**LEE** You-hyeon	(24) 08.02.97	Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors
3	**KIM** Jae-woo	(23) 06.02.98	Daegu
4	**PARK** Ji-soo*	(27) 13.06.94	Gimcheon Sangmu
5	**JEONG** Tae-wook	(24) 16.05.97	Daegu
12	**SEOL** Young-woo	(22) 05.12.98	Ulsan Hyundai
13	**KIM** Jin-ya	(23) 30.06.98	Seoul
19	**KANG** Yoon-sung	(24) 01.07.97	Jeju United
20	**LEE** Sang-min	(23) 01.01.98	Seoul E-Land

MIDFIELDERS

6	**JEONG** Seung-won	(24) 27.02.97	Ulsan Hyundai
7	**KWON** Chang-hoon*	(27) 30.06.94	Suwon Samsung Bluewings
8	**LEE** Kang-in	(20) 19.02.01	Valencia (Spa)
10	**LEE** Dong-gyeong	(23) 20.09.97	Ulsan Hyundai
14	**KIM** Dong-hyun	(24) 11.06.97	Gangwon
15	**WON** Du-jae	(23) 18.11.97	Ulsan Hyundai
21	**KIM** Jin-kyu	(24) 24.02.97	Busan IPark

FORWARDS

9	**SONG** Min-kyu	(21) 12.09.99	Pohang Steelers
11	**LEE** Dong-jun	(24) 01.02.97	Ulsan Hyundai
16	**HWANG** Ui-jo*	(28) 28.08.92	Bordeaux (Fra)
17	**UM** Won-sang	(22) 06.01.99	Gwangju

COACH

KIM Hak-Bum	(61) 01.03.60	

SPAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Unai **SIMON**	(24) 11.06.97	Athletic Bilbao
13	Alvaro **FERNANDEZ**	(23) 13.04.98	Huesca
22	Ivan **VILLAR**	(24) 09.07.97	Celta Vigo

DEFENDERS

2	Oscar **MINGUEZA**	(22) 13.05.99	Barcelona
3	Marc **CUCURELLA**	(23) 22.07.98	Getafe
4	Pau **TORRES**	(24) 16.01.97	Villarreal
5	Jesus **VALLEJO**	(24) 05.01.97	Granada
12	Eric **GARCIA**	(20) 09.01.01	Barcelona
18	Oscar **GIL**	(23) 26.04.98	Espanyol
20	Juan **MIRANDA**	(21) 19.01.00	Real Betis

MIDFIELDERS

6	Martin **ZUBIMENDI**	(22) 02.02.99	Real Sociedad
8	Mikel **MERINO***	(25) 22.06.96	Real Sociedad
10	Dani **CEBALLOS***	(24) 07.08.96	Real Madrid
14	Carlos **SOLER**	(24) 02.01.97	Valencia
15	Jon **MONCAYOLA**	(23) 13.05.98	Osasuna
16	**PEDRI**	(18) 25.11.02	Barcelona
17	Javi **PUADO**	(23) 25.05.98	Espanyol

FORWARDS

7	Marco **ASENSIO***	(25) 21.01.96	Real Madrid
9	Rafa **MIR**	(24) 18.06.97	Huesca
11	Mikel **OYARZABAL**	(24) 21.04.97	Real Sociedad
19	Dani **OLMO**	(23) 07.05.98	RB Leipzig (Ger)
21	Bryan **GIL**	(20) 11.02.01	Eibar

COACH

Luis **DE LA FUENTE**	(60) 21.06.61	

**denotes overage players (ages and clubs as of 22.07.21)*

TOKYO 2020 OLYMPICS WOMEN

AUSTRALIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lydia **WILLIAMS**	(33) 13.05.88	Arsenal (Eng)
18	Teagan **MICAH**	(23) 20.10.97	Sandviken (Nor)
22	Mackenzie **ARNOLD**	(27) 25.02.94	West Ham United (Eng)

DEFENDERS

4	Clare **POLKINGHORNE**	(32) 01.02.89	Vittsjo (Swe)
7	Steph **CATLEY**	(27) 26.01.94	Arsenal (Eng)
12	Ellie **CARPENTER**	(21) 28.04.00	Lyon (Fra)
14	Alanna **KENNEDY**	(26) 21.01.95	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
19	Courtney **NEVIN**	(19) 12.02.02	Western Sydney Wanderers
20	Charlotte **GRANT**	(19) 20.09.01	Rosengard (Swe)
21	Laura **BROCK**	(31) 28.11.89	Guingamp (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

3	Kyra **COONEY-CROSS**	(19) 15.02.02	Melbourne Victory
5	Aivi **LUIK**	(36) 18.03.85	Sevilla (Spa)
6	Chloe **LOGARZO**	(26) 22.12.94	Kansas City (USA)
8	Elise **KELLOND-KNIGHT**	(30) 10.08.90	Hammarby (Swe)
10	Emily **VAN EGMOND**	(28) 12.07.93	West Ham United (Eng)
13	Tameka **YALLOP**	(30) 16.06.91	Brisbane Roar

FORWARDS

2	Sam **KERR**	(27) 10.09.93	Chelsea (Eng)
9	Caitlin **FOORD**	(26) 11.11.94	Arsenal (Eng)
11	Mary **FOWLER**	(18) 14.02.03	Montpellier (Fra)
15	Emily **GIELNIK**	(29) 13.05.92	Vittsjo (Swe)
16	Hayley **RASO**	(26) 05.09.94	Everton (Eng)
17	Kyah **SIMON**	(30) 25.06.91	PSV (Ned)

COACH

Tony **GUSTAVSSON** (Swe) (47) 14.08.73

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS

1	**BARBARA**	(33) 04.07.88	Kindermann
18	Leticia **IZIDORO**	(26) 13.08.94	Benfica (Por)
22	**ALINE**	(32) 15.04.89	Granadilla (Spa)

DEFENDERS

2	**POLIANA**	(30) 06.02.91	Corinthians
3	**ERIKA**	(33) 04.02.88	Corinthians
4	**RAFAELLE**	(30) 18.06.91	Palmeiras
6	**TAMIRES**	(33) 10.10.87	Corinthians
13	**BRUNA**	(35) 16.10.85	Internacional
14	**JUCINARA**	(27) 03.08.93	Levante (Spa)
19	Leticia **SANTOS**	(26) 02.12.94	Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

5	**JULIA**	(23) 07.10.97	Palmeiras
7	**DUDA**	(26) 18.07.95	Sao Paulo
8	**FORMIGA**	(43) 03.03.78	Sao Paulo
11	**ANGELINA**	(21) 26.01.00	OL Reign (USA)
15	**GEYSE**	(23) 27.03.98	Madrid CFF (Spa)
17	**ANDRESSINHA**	(26) 01.05.95	Corinthians

FORWARDS

9	**DEBINHA**	(29) 20.10.91	North Carolina Courage (USA)
10	**MARTA**	(35) 19.02.86	Orlando Pride (USA)
12	**LUDMILA**	(26) 01.12.94	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
16	**BEATRIZ**	(27) 17.12.93	Palmeiras
20	**GIOVANA**	(18) 21.06.03	Barcelona (Spa)
21	**ANDRESSA**	(28) 10.11.92	Roma (Spa)

COACH

Pia **SUNDHAGE** (Swe) (61) 13.02.60

CANADA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Stephanie **LABBE**	(34) 10.10.86	Rosengard (Swe)
18	Kailen **SHERIDAN**	(26) 16.07.95	NJ/NY Gotham (USA)
22	Erin **McLEOD**	(38) 26.02.83	Orlando Pride (USA)

DEFENDERS

2	Allysha **CHAPMAN**	(32) 25.01.89	Houston Dash (USA)
3	Kadeisha **BUCHANAN**	(25) 05.11.95	Lyon (Fra)
4	Shelina **ZADORSKY**	(28) 24.10.92	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
8	Jayde **RIVIERE**	(20) 22.01.01	Michigan Wolverines (USA)
10	Ashley **LAWRENCE**	(26) 11.06.95	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
14	Vanessa **GILLES**	(25) 11.03.96	Bordeaux (Fra)
21	Gabrielle **CARLE**	(22) 12.10.98	Florida State Seminoles (USA)

MIDFIELDERS

5	**QUINN**	(25) 11.08.95	OL Reign (USA)
7	Julia **GROSSO**	(20) 29.08.00	Texas Longhorns (USA)
11	Desiree **SCOTT**	(33) 31.07.87	Kansas City (USA)
17	Jessie **FLEMING**	(23) 11.03.98	Chelsea (Eng)
20	Sophie **SCHMIDT**	(33) 28.06.88	Houston Dash (USA)

FORWARDS

6	Deanne **ROSE**	(22) 03.03.99	Florida Gators (USA)
9	Adriana **LEON**	(28) 02.10.92	West Ham United (Eng)
12	Christine **SINCLAIR**	(38) 12.06.83	Portland Thorns (USA)
13	Evelyne **VIENS**	(24) 06.02.97	NJ/NY Gotham (USA)
15	Nichelle **PRINCE**	(26) 19.02.95	Houston Dash (USA)
16	Janine **BECKIE**	(26) 20.08.94	Manchester City (Eng)
19	Jordyn **HUITEMA**	(20) 08.05.01	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)

COACH

Bev **PRIESTMAN** (Eng) (35) 29.04.86

CHILE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Christiane **ENDLER**	(29) 23.07.91	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
12	Natalia **CAMPOS**	(29) 12.01.92	Universidad de Chile
22	Antonia **CANALES**	(18) 16.10.02	Universidad Catolica

DEFENDERS

3	Carla **GUERRERO**	(33) 23.12.87	Universidad de Chile
5	Fernanda **RAMIREZ**	(28) 30.08.92	Universidad de Chile
13	Fernanda **PINILLA**	(27) 06.11.93	Universidad de Chile
17	Javiera **TORO**	(23) 22.04.98	Sevilla (Spa)
18	Camila **SAEZ**	(26) 17.10.94	Rayo Vallecano (Spa)
21	Valentina **DIAZ**	(20) 30.03.01	Colo-Colo

MIDFIELDERS

2	Yastin **JIMENEZ**	(20) 17.10.00	Colo-Colo
4	Francisca **LARA**	(30) 29.07.90	Le Havre (Fra)
6	Nayadet **LOPEZ**	(26) 05.08.94	Santa Teresa (Spa)
8	Karen **ARAYA**	(30) 16.10.90	Santiago Morning
11	Yessenia **LOPEZ**	(30) 20.10.90	Universidad de Chile
14	Daniela **PARDO**	(33) 09.05.88	Santiago Morning
20	Francisca **MARDONES**	(32) 24.03.89	Santiago Morning

FORWARDS

7	Yenny **ACUNA**	(24) 18.05.97	Santiago Morning
9	Maria Jose **URRUTIA**	(27) 17.12.93	Colo-Colo
10	Yanara **AEDO**	(27) 05.08.93	Rayo Vallecano (Spa)
15	Daniela **ZAMORA**	(30) 13.11.90	Djurgardens (Swe)
16	Rosario **BALMACEDA**	(22) 23.03.99	Santiago Morning
19	Javiera **GREZ**	(21) 11.07.00	Colo-Colo

COACH

Jose **LETELIER** (55) 23.05.66

CHINA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Zhu **YU**	(23) 23.07.97	Wuhan Jianghan University
12	Peng **SHIMENG**	(23) 12.05.98	Jiangsu
22	Ding **XUAN**	(32) 11.02.89	Shanghai Shengli

DEFENDERS

2	Li **MENGWEN**	(26) 28.03.95	Jiangsu
3	Lin **YUPING**	(29) 28.02.92	Meizhou Hakka
5	Wu **HAIYAN**	(28) 26.02.93	Wuhan Jianghan University
16	Wang **XIAOXUE**	(26) 20.10.94	Jiangsu
17	Luo **GUIPING**	(28) 20.04.93	Meizhou Hakka

MIDFIELDERS

4	Li **QINGTONG**	(22) 14.04.99	Meizhou Hakka
6	Zhang **XIN**	(29) 23.05.92	Shanghai Shengli
7	Wang **SHUANG**	(26) 23.01.95	Wuhan Jianghan University
8	Wang **YAN**	(29) 22.08.91	Beijing Phoenix
9	Miao **SIWEN**	(26) 24.01.95	Shanghai Shengli
10	Wang **YANWEN**	(22) 27.03.99	Beijing Phoenix
13	Yang **LINA**	(27) 13.04.94	Shanghai Shengli
14	Liu **JING**	(23) 28.04.98	Changchun Dazhong Zhuoyue
19	Wang **YING**	(23) 18.11.97	Wuhan Jianghan University
21	Chen **QIAOZHU**	(21) 08.09.99	Meizhou Hakka

FORWARDS

11	Wang **SHANSHAN**	(31) 27.01.90	Tianjin Shengde
15	Yang **MAN**	(25) 02.11.95	Shandong Sports Lottery
18	**WURIGUMULA**	(24) 26.08.96	Changchun Dazhong Zhuoyue
20	Xiao **YUYI**	(25) 10.01.96	Shanghai Shengli

COACH

Jia **XIUQUAN** (57) 09.11.63

GREAT BRITAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ellie **ROEBUCK**	(21) 23.09.99	Manchester City
13	Carly **TELFORD**	(34) 07.07.87	Chelsea
22	Sandy **MACIVER**	(23) 18.06.98	Everton

DEFENDERS

2	Lucy **BRONZE**	(29) 28.10.91	Manchester City
3	Demi **STOKES**	(29) 12.12.91	Manchester City
5	Steph **HOUGHTON**	(33) 23.04.88	Manchester City
12	Rachel **DALY**	(29) 06.12.91	Houston Dash (USA)
14	Millie **BRIGHT**	(27) 21.08.93	Chelsea
16	Leah **WILLIAMSON**	(24) 29.03.97	Arsenal
21	Lotte **WUBBEN-MOY**	(22) 11.01.99	Arsenal

MIDFIELDERS

4	Keira **WALSH**	(24) 08.04.97	Manchester City
6	Sophie **INGLE**	(29) 02.09.91	Chelsea
8	Kim **LITTLE**	(31) 29.06.90	Arsenal
11	Caroline **WEIR**	(26) 20.06.95	Manchester City
17	Georgia **STANWAY**	(22) 03.01.99	Manchester City
18	Jill **SCOTT**	(34) 02.02.87	Everton

FORWARDS

7	Nikita **PARRIS**	(27) 10.03.94	Arsenal
9	Ellen **WHITE**	(32) 09.05.89	Manchester City
10	Fran **KIRBY**	(28) 29.06.93	Chelsea
15	Lauren **HEMP**	(20) 07.08.00	Manchester City
19	Niamh **CHARLES**	(22) 21.06.99	Chelsea
20	Ella **TOONE**	(21) 02.09.99	Manchester United

COACH

Hege **RIISE** (Nor) (52) 18.07.69

Hat-trick hero...Ellen White crashed out with Team GB despite her treble v Australia

JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sakiko **IKEDA**	(28) 08.09.92	Urawa Reds
18	Ayaka **YAMASHITA**	(25) 29.09.95	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
22	Chika **HIRAO**	(24) 31.12.96	Albirex Niigata

DEFENDERS

2	Risa **SHIMIZU**	(25) 15.06.96	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
3	Saori **TAKARADA**	(21) 27.12.99	Washington Spirit (USA)
4	Saki **KUMAGAI**	(30) 17.10.90	Lyon (Fra)
5	Moeka **MINAMI**	(22) 07.12.98	Urawa Reds
16	Asato **MIYAGAWA**	(23) 24.02.98	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
17	Nanami **KITAMURA**	(21) 25.11.99	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
19	Shiori **MIYAKE**	(25) 13.10.95	INAC Kobe Leonessa

MIDFIELDERS

6	Hina **SUGITA**	(24) 31.01.97	INAC Kobe Leonessa
7	Emi **NAKAJIMA**	(30) 27.09.90	INAC Kobe Leonessa
8	Narumi **MIURA**	(24) 03.07.97	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
12	Jun **ENDO**	(21) 24.05.00	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza
13	Yuzuho **SHIOKOSHI**	(23) 01.11.97	Urawa Reds
14	Yui **HASEGAWA**	(24) 29.01.97	Milan (Ita)
20	Honoka **HAYASHI**	(23) 19.05.98	AIK (Swe)
21	Momoka **KINOSHITA**	(18) 02.03.03	Nippon Tokyo Verdy Beleza

FORWARDS

9	Yuika **SUGASAWA**	(30) 05.10.90	Urawa Reds
10	Mana **IWABUCHI**	(28) 18.03.93	Arsenal (Eng)
11	Mina **TANAKA**	(27) 28.04.94	INAC Kobe Leonessa
15	Yuka **MOMIKI**	(25) 09.04.96	OL Reign (USA)

COACH

Asako **TAKAKURA** (53) 19.04.68

NETHERLANDS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sari **VAN VEENENDAAL**	(31) 03.04.90	PSV
16	Lize **KOP**	(23) 17.03.98	Ajax
22	Loes **GEURTS**	(35) 12.01.86	Hacken (Swe)

DEFENDERS

2	Lynn **WILMS**	(20) 03.10.00	FC Twente
3	Stefanie **VAN DER GRAGT**	(28) 16.08.92	Ajax
4	Aniek **NOUWEN**	(22) 09.03.99	PSV
5	Merel **VAN DONGEN**	(28) 11.02.93	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
12	Sisca **FOLKERTSMA**	(24) 21.05.97	FC Twente
15	Kika **VAN ES**	(29) 11.10.91	FC Twente
17	Dominique **JANSSEN**	(26) 17.01.95	Wolfsburg (Ger)
21	Anouk **DEKKER**	(34) 15.11.86	Montpellier (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jill **ROORD**	(24) 22.04.97	Arsenal (Eng)
10	Danielle **VAN DE DONK**	(29) 05.08.91	Arsenal (Eng)
13	Victoria **PELOVA**	(22) 03.06.99	Ajax
14	Jackie **GROENEN**	(26) 17.12.94	Manchester United (Eng)
20	Inessa **KAAGMAN**	(25) 17.04.96	Brighton (Eng)

FORWARDS

7	Shanice **VAN DE SANDEN**	(28) 02.10.92	Wolfsburg (Ger)
8	Joelle **SMITS**	(21) 07.02.00	PSV
9	Vivianne **MIEDEMA**	(25) 15.07.96	Arsenal (Eng)
11	Lieke **MARTENS**	(28) 16.12.92	Barcelona (Spa)
18	Lineth **BEERENSTEYN**	(24) 11.10.96	Bayern Munich (Ger)
19	Renate **JANSEN**	(30) 07.12.90	FC Twente

COACH

Sarina **WIEGMAN** (51) 26.10.69

Top scorer...Vivianne Miedema scored a record ten goals for the Netherlands

NEW ZEALAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Erin **NAYLER**	(29) 17.04.92	Reading (Eng)
18	Anna **LEAT**	(20) 26.06.01	FFDP
22	Victoria **ESSON**	(30) 06.03.91	Avaldsnes (Nor)

DEFENDERS

3	Anna **GREEN**	(30) 20.08.90	Lower Hutt City
4	C. J. **BOTT**	(26) 22.04.95	Valerenga (Nor)
5	Meikayla **MOORE**	(25) 04.06.96	Liverpool (Eng)
6	Claudia **BUNGE**	(21) 21.09.99	Melbourne Victory (Aus)
7	Ali **RILEY**	(33) 30.10.87	Orlando Pride (USA)
8	Abby **ERCEG**	(31) 20.11.89	North Carolina Courage (USA)
19	Elizabeth **ANTON**	(22) 12.12.98	FFDP
20	Marisa **VAN DER MEER**	(19) 27.03.02	FFDP

MIDFIELDERS

2	Ria **PERCIVAL**	(31) 07.12.89	Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
10	Annalie **LONGO**	(30) 01.07.91	Melbourne Victory (Aus)
12	Betsy **HASSETT**	(30) 04.08.90	Stjarnan (Ice)
14	Katie **BOWEN**	(27) 15.04.94	Kansas City (USA)
15	Daisy **CLEVERLEY**	(24) 30.04.97	Georgetown Hoyas (USA)
16	Emma **ROLSTON**	(24) 10.11.96	Northern Lights

FORWARDS

9	Gabi **RENNIE**	(20) 07.07.01	Indiana Hoosiers (USA)
11	Olivia **CHANCE**	(27) 05.10.93	Brisbane Roar (Aus)
13	Paige **SATCHELL**	(23) 13.04.98	Canberra United (Aus)
17	Hannah **WILKINSON**	(29) 28.05.92	Duisburg (Ger)
21	Michaela **ROBERTSON**	(24) 28.08.96	Lower Hutt City

COACH

Tom **SERMANNI** (Sco) (67) 01.07.54

SWEDEN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Hedvig **LINDAHL**	(38) 29.04.83	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
12	Jennifer **FALK**	(28) 26.04.93	Hacken
22	Zecira **MUSOVIC**	(25) 26.05.96	Chelsea (Eng)

DEFENDERS

2	Jonna **ANDERSSON**	(28) 02.01.93	Chelsea (Eng)
3	Emma **KULLBERG**	(29) 25.09.91	Hacken
4	Hanna **GLAS**	(28) 16.04.93	Bayern Munich (Ger)
6	Magdalena **ERIKSSON**	(27) 08.09.93	Chelsea (Eng)
13	Amanda **ILESTEDT**	(28) 17.01.93	Bayern Munich (Ger)
14	Nathalie **BJORN**	(24) 04.05.97	Rosengard

MIDFIELDERS

5	Hanna **BENNISON**	(18) 16.10.02	Rosengard
8	Lina **HURTIG**	(25) 05.09.95	Juventus (Ita)
9	Kosovare **ASLLANI**	(31) 29.07.89	Real Madrid (Spa)
16	Filippa **ANGELDAL**	(24) 14.07.97	Hacken
17	Caroline **SEGER**	(36) 19.03.85	Rosengard
20	Julia **RODDAR**	(29) 16.02.92	Washington Spirit (USA)

FORWARDS

7	Madelen **JANOGY**	(25) 12.11.95	Hammarby
10	Sofia **JAKOBSSON**	(31) 23.04.90	Real Madrid (Spa)
11	Stina **BLACKSTENIUS**	(25) 05.02.96	Hacken
15	Olivia **SCHOUGH**	(30) 11.03.91	Rosengard
18	Fridolina **ROLFO**	(27) 24.11.93	Wolfsburg (Ger)
19	Anna **ANVEGARD**	(24) 10.05.97	Rosengard
21	Rebecka **BLOMQVIST**	(23) 24.07.97	Wolfsburg (Ger)

COACH

Peter **GERHARDSSON** (61) 22.08.59

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alyssa **NAEHER**	(33) 20.04.88	Chicago Red Stars
18	Adrianna **FRANCH**	(30) 12.11.90	Portland Thorns
22	Jane **CAMPBELL**	(26) 17.02.95	Houston Dash

DEFENDERS

2	Crystal **DUNN**	(29) 03.07.92	Portland Thorns
4	Becky **SAUERBRUNN**	(36) 06.06.85	Portland Thorns
5	Kelley **O'HARA**	(32) 04.08.88	Washington Spirit
12	Tierna **DAVIDSON**	(22) 19.09.98	Chicago Red Stars
14	Emily **SONNETT**	(27) 25.11.93	Washington Spirit
17	Abby **DAHLKEMPER**	(28) 13.05.93	Manchester City (Eng)
20	Casey **KRUEGER**	(30) 23.08.90	Chicago Red Stars

MIDFIELDERS

3	Sam **MEWIS**	(28) 09.10.92	North Carolina Courage
6	Kristie **MEWIS**	(30) 25.02.91	Houston Dash
8	Julie **ERTZ**	(29) 06.04.92	Chicago Red Stars
9	Lindsey **HORAN**	(27) 26.05.94	Portland Thorns
16	Rose **LAVELLE**	(26) 14.05.95	OL Reign
19	Catarina **MACARIO**	(21) 04.10.99	Lyon (Fra)

FORWARDS

7	Tobin **HEATH**	(33) 29.05.88	Unattached
10	Carli **LLOYD**	(39) 16.07.82	Gotham FC
11	Christen **PRESS**	(32) 29.12.88	Unattached
13	Alex **MORGAN**	(32) 02.07.89	Orlando Pride
15	Megan **RAPINOE**	(36) 05.07.85	OL Reign
21	Lynn **WILLIAMS**	(28) 21.05.93	North Carolina Courage

COACH

Vlatko **ANDONOVSKI** (Mkd) (44) 14.09.76

ZAMBIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Catherine **MUSONDA**	(23) 20.02.98	Indeni Roses
16	Hazel **NALI**	(23) 04.04.98	Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr)
22	Ngambo **MUSOLE**	(23) 26.06.98	ZESCO United

DEFENDERS

2	Fikile **KHOSA**	(24) 24.07.96	Red Arrows
3	Lushomo **MWEEMBA**	(20) 10.04.01	Green Buffaloes
4	Esther **SIAMFUKO**	(16) 08.08.04	Queens Academy
5	Anita **MULENGA**	(26) 03.05.95	Green Buffaloes
8	Margaret **BELEMU**	(24) 24.02.97	Red Arrows
13	Martha **TEMBO**	(23) 08.03.98	Green Buffaloes
18	Vast **PHIRI**	(25) 03.02.96	ZESCO United
20	Esther **MUKWASA**	(24) 24.10.96	Indeni Roses

MIDFIELDERS

6	Mary **WILOMBE**	(23) 22.09.97	Red Arrows
10	Grace **CHANDA**	(24) 11.06.97	Red Arrows
14	Ireen **LUNGU**	(23) 06.10.97	Green Buffaloes
15	Agness **MUSASE**	(24) 11.07.97	Green Buffaloes
17	Racheal **KUNDANANJI**	(21) 03.06.00	BIIK Kazygurt (Kaz)
19	Evarine **KATONGO**	(18) 29.12.02	ZISD Queens
21	Hellen **CHANDA**	(23) 19.06.98	Red Arrows

FORWARDS

7	Lubandji **OCHUMBA**	(20) 01.07.01	Red Arrows
9	Hellen **MUBANGA**	(26) 23.05.95	Zaragoza CFF (Spa)
11	Barbra **BANDA**	(21) 20.03.00	Shanghai Shengli (Chn)
12	Avell **CHITUNDU**	(23) 30.07.97	ZESCO United

COACH

Bruce **MWAPE**

(ages and clubs as of 21.07.21)

Internationals

2020 OLYMPICS

Men's Tournament

Group A

Jul 22 – Tokyo
Mexico 4 (Vega 47, Cordova 55, Antuna 80, Aguirre 90+1)
France 1 (Gignac 69 pen)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)

Jul 22 – Tokyo
Japan 1 (Kubo 71)
South Africa 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Valenzuela (Ven)

Jul 25 – Saitama
France 4 (Gignac 57, 78, 86 pen, Savanier 90+3)
South Africa 3 (Kodisang 53, Makgopa 73, Mokoena 82)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ortega (Per)

Jul 25 – Saitama
Japan 2 (Kubo 6, Doan 11 pen)
Mexico 1 (Alvarado 85)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Dias (Por)

Jul 28 – Yokohama
France 0
Japan 4 (Kubo 27, Sakai 34, Miyoshi 70, Maeda 90+1)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Barton (Slv)

Jul 28 – Yokohama
South Africa 0
Mexico 3 (Vega 18, Romo 45+1, Martin 60)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Conger (Nzl)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Mexico (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	3	6
France	3	1	0	2	5	11	3
South Africa	3	0	0	3	3	8	0

Group B

Jul 22 – Kashima
New Zealand 1 (Wood 70)
South Korea 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gomes (RSA)

Jul 22 – Kashima
Honduras 0
Romania 1 (Oliva 45+1 og)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Uru)

Jul 25 – Kashima
New Zealand 1 (Cacace 10, Wood 49)
Honduras 3 (Palma 45+1, Obregon Jr 59, Rivas 87)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Grinfeld (Isr)

Jul 25 – Kashima
Romania 0
South Korea 4 (Marin 27 og, Um Won-sang 59, Lee Kang-in 84 pen, 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Valenzuela (Ven)

Jul 28 – Sapporo
Romania 0
New Zealand 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ortega (Per)

Jul 28 – Yokohama
South Korea 6 (Hwang Ui-jo 12 pen, 45+5, 52 pen, Won Da-jae 19 pen, Kim Jin-ya 64, Lee Kang-in 82)
Honduras 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea (Q)	3	2	0	1	10	1	6
New Zealand (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Romania	3	1	1	1	1	4	4
Honduras	3	1	0	2	3	9	3

Group C

Jul 22 – Sapporo
Egypt 0
Spain 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Makhadmeh (Jor)

Jul 22 – Sapporo
Argentina 0
Australia 2 (Wales 14, Tilio 80)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Ser)

Jul 25 – Sapporo
Egypt 0
Argentina 1 (Medina 52)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)

Jul 25 – Sapporo
Australia 0
Spain 1 (Oyarzabal 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Weyesa (Eth)

Jul 28 – Rifu
Australia 0
Egypt 2 (Rayyan 44, A. Hamdy 85)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Dias (Por)

Jul 28 – Saitama
Spain 1 (Merino 66)
Argentina 1 (Belmonte 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain (Q)	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Egypt (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Argentina	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Australia	3	1	0	2	2	3	3

Group D

Jul 22 – Yokohama
Ivory Coast 2 (Al-Amri 39 og, Kessie 66)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Dawsari 44)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Conger (Nzl)

Jul 22 – Yokohama
Brazil 4 (Richarlison 7, 22, 30, Paulinho 90+5)
Germany 2 (Amiri 57, Ache 84)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Barton (Slv)

Jul 25 – Yokohama
Brazil 0
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)

Jul 25 – Yokohama
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Najei 30, 50)
Germany 3 (Amiri 11, Ache 43, Uduokhai 75)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Gomes (RSA)

Jul 28 – Saitama
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Amri 27)
Brazil 3 (Cunha 14, Richarlison 76, 90+1)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Weyesa (Eth)

Jul 28 – Rifu
Germany 1 (Lowen 73)
Ivory Coast 1 (Henrichs 69 og)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Uru)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Ivory Coast (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Germany	3	1	1	1	6	7	4
Saudi Arabia	3	0	0	3	4	8	0

Quarter-Finals

Jul 31 – Rifu
Spain 5 (Olmo 30, Mir 90+3, 117, 120+1, Oyarzabal 98 pen)
Ivory Coast 2 (Bailly 10, Gradel 90+1)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Valenzuela (Ven)
After Extra-Time

Jul 31 – Kashima
Japan 0
New Zealand 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)
After Extra-Time. Japan win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 31 – Saitama
Brazil 1 (Cunha 37)
Egypt 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)

July 31 – Yokohama
South Korea 3 (Lee Dong-gyeong 20, 51, Hwang Ui-jo 90+1)
Mexico 6 (Martin 12, 54, Romo 30, Cordova 39 pen, 63, Aguirre 84)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Grinfeld (Isr)

Semi-Finals

Aug 3 – Kashima
Mexico 0
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kabakov (Bul)
After Extra-Time. Brazil win 4-1 on penalties

Aug 3 – Saitama
Japan 0
Spain 1 (Asensio 115)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ortega (Per)
After Extra-Time

Bronze Medal Match

Aug 6 – Saitama
Mexico 3 (Cordova 13 pen, Vasquez 22, Vega 58)
Japan 1 (Mitoma 78)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Weyesa (Eth)

Gold Medal Match

Aug 7 – Yokohama
Brazil 1 (Cunha 45+2, Malcom 108)
Spain 1 (Oyarzabal 61)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
After Extra-Time

2020 OLYMPICS

Women's Tournament

Group E

Jul 21 – Sapporo
Great Britain 2 (White 18, 73)
Chile 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mukansanga (Rwa)

Jul 21 – Tokyo
Japan 1 (Iwabuchi 84)
Canada 1 (Sinclair 6)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Batista (Bra)

Jul 24 – Saitama
Chile 1 (Araya 57 pen)
Canada 2 (Beckie 39, 47)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Staubli (Swi)

Jul 24 – Saitama
Japan 0
Great Britain 1 (White 74)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pustovoitova (Rus)

Jul 27 – Yokohama
Chile 0
Japan 1 (Tanaka 77)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Borjas (Hon)

Jul 27 – Yokohama
Canada 1 (Leon 55)
Great Britain 1 (Prince 85 og)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Monzul (Ukr)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Great Britain (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Canada (Q)	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Japan (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Chile	3	0	0	3	1	5	0

Group F

Jul 21 – Rifu
China 0
Brazil 5 (Marta 9, 74, Debinha 22, Andressa 82 pen, Beatriz 89)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Monzul (Ukr)

Jul 21 – Rifu
Zambia 3 (Banda 19, 82, 83)
Netherlands 10 (Miedema 9, 15, 29, 59, Martens 14, 38, Van de Sanden 44, Roord 64, Beerensteyn 75, Pelova 80)
HT: 1-6. **Ref:** Fortunato (Arg)

Jul 24 – Rifu
China 4 (Wang Shuang 6, 22, 23, 84 pen)
Zambia 4 (Kundananji 15, Banda 43 pen, 46, 69)
HT: 3-2. **Ref:** Borjas (Hon)

Jul 24 – Rifu
Netherlands 3 (Miedema 3, 59, Janssen 79)
Brazil 3 (Debinha 16, Marta 65 pen, Ludmila 68)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Jacewicz (Aus)

Jul 27 – Yokohama
Netherlands 8 (Van de Sanden 12, Beerensteyn 37, 45+2, Martens 47, 70, Miedema 65, 76, Pelova 71)
China 2 (Wang Shuang 28, Wang Yanwen 69)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Mukansanga (Rwa)

Jul 27 – Saitama
Brazil 1 (Andressa 19)
Zambia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Yamashita (Jap)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netherlands (Q)	3	2	1	0	21	8	7
Brazil (Q)	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Zambia	3	0	1	2	7	15	1
China	3	0	1	2	6	17	1

Group G

Jul 21 – Tokyo
Sweden 3 (Blackstenius 25, 54, Hurtig 72)
United States 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Yamashita (Jap)

Jul 21 – Tokyo
Australia 2 (Yallop 20, Kerr 33)
New Zealand 1 (Rennie 90+1)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Venegas (Mex)

Jul 24 – Saitama
Sweden 4 (Rolfo 20, 63, Hurtig 52, Blackstenius 82)
Australia 2 (Kerr 36, 48)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Batista (Bra)

Jul 24 – Saitama
New Zealand 1 (Hassett 72)
United States 6 (Lavelle 9, Horan 45, Erceg 63 og, Press 80, Morgan 88, Bott 90+3 og)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Frappert (Fra)

Jul 27 – Rifu
New Zealand 0
Sweden 2 (Anvegard 17, Janogy 29)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Fortunato (Arg)

Jul 27 – Kashima
United States 0
Australia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pustovoitova (Rus)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	2	9
United States (Q)	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Australia (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
New Zealand	3	0	0	3	2	10	0

Quarter-Finals

Jul 30 – Rifu
Canada 0
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Frappart (Fra)
After Extra-Time. Canada win 4-3 on penalties

Jul 30 – Kashima
Great Britain 3 (White 57, 66, 115)
Australia 4 (Kennedy 35, Kerr 89, 106, Fowler 103)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mukansanga (Rwa)
After Extra-Time

Jul 30 – Saitama
Sweden 3 (Eriksson 7, Blackstenius 53, Asllani 68 pen)
Japan 1 (Tanaka 23)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Venegas (Mex)

July 30 – Yokohama
Netherlands 2 (Miedema 18, 54)
United States 2 (S. Mewis 28, Williams 31)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Jacewicz (Aus)
After Extra-Time. USA win 4-2 on penalties

Semi-Finals

Aug 2 – Kashima
United States 0
Canada 1 (Fleming 75)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Monzul (Ukr)

Aug 2 – Yokohama
Australia 0
Sweden 1 (Rolfo 46)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Borjas (Hon)

Bronze Medal Match

Aug 5 – Kashima
Australia 3 (Kerr 17, Foord 54, Gielnik 90)
United States 4 (Rapinoe 8, 21, Lloyd 45+1, 51)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Fortunato (Arg)

Gold Medal Match

Aug 6 – Yokohama
Sweden 1 (Blackstenius 34)
Canada 1 (Fleming 68 pen)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pustovoitova (Rus)
After Extra-Time. Canada win 3-2 on penalties

AFRICA

2021 COSAFA CUP

Group A

Jul 6 – Port Elizabeth
Eswatini 3 (Badenhorst 42, Khethkulhe 57, Mamba 78)
Lesotho 1 (Khutlang 45+4)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tom (RSA)

Jul 6 – Port Elizabeth
South Africa 1 (Malinga 6)
Botswana 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Chimene (Zim)

Jul 8 – Port Elizabeth
Zambia 1 (Shonga 2)
Lesotho 2 (Motebang 70, 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Makalima (RSA)

Jul 8 – Port Elizabeth
South Africa 1 (Sibanyoni 59)
Eswatini 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Muianga (Moz)

Jul 10 – Port Elizabeth
Lesotho 0
Botswana 4 (Orebonye 28, 45+4 pen, 69, Kgamanyane 73)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Sibandze (Esw)

Jul 10 – Port Elizabeth
Zambia 0
Eswatini 1 (Gomedze 53)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Tom (RSA)

Jul 13 – Port Elizabeth
Botswana 1 (Kgamanyane 62)
Zambia 2 (Shonga 21, 83 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Sibandze (Esw)

Jul 13 – Port Elizabeth
South Africa 4 (Letsoalo 5, 44, 57, Mkhulise 20)
Lesotho 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Nkole (Zam)

Jul 14 – Port Elizabeth
South Africa 0
Zambia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chimene (Zim)

Jul 14 – Port Elizabeth
Eswatini 1 (Ndzinisa 19)
Botswana 1 (Kgamanyane 65)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Nkole (Zam)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa (Q)	4	3	1	0	6	0	10
Eswatini (Q)	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Zambia	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Botswana	4	1	1	2	6	4	4
Lesotho	4	1	0	3	3	12	3

Group B

Jul 7 – Port Elizabeth
Mozambique 0
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Adelaide (Sey)

Jul 7 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 1 (Diene 17)
Namibia 2 (Papama 13, Kambindu 50)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Dungula (Ang)

Jul 9 – Port Elizabeth
Malawi 2 (Muyaba 27, Kuwali 50)
Zimbabwe 2 (Sarupinda 62, Musaka 79)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Dintwa (Bot)

Jul 9 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 1 (Djitte 63)
Mozambique 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Koto (Les)

Jul 11 – Port Elizabeth
Namibia 2 (Amini 70 og, Kambindu 86)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nkolo (Zam)

Jul 11 – Port Elizabeth
Mozambique 2 (Vitinho 55 pen, Simbine 68)
Malawi 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chimene (Zim)

Jul 13 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 2 (Ndoye 44, Ba 88)
Zimbabwe 1 (Amini 3 pen)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tom (RSA)

Jul 13 – Port Elizabeth
Malawi 1 (Mhone 73)
Namibia 1 (Kambindu 53)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Makalima (RSA)

Jul 14 – Port Elizabeth
Mozambique 1 (Melito 80)
Namibia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Koto (Les)

Jul 14 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 2 (Diop 11, 90+1)
Malawi 1 (Muyaba 35)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Dintwa (Bot)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (Q)	4	3	0	1	6	4	9
Mozambique (Q)	4	2	1	1	3	1	7
Namibia	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Malawi	4	0	2	2	4	7	2
Zimbabwe	4	0	2	2	3	6	2

Semi-Finals

Jul 16 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 2 (Djitte 58, Kane 80)
Eswatini 2 (Matse 15, Ndzinisa 20)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Koto (Les)
Senegal win 3-0 on penalties

Jul 16 – Port Elizabeth
South Africa 3 (Ngcobo 24, Maart 59, Letsoalo 73 pen)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Chimene (Zim)

Third-Place Play-Off

Jul 18 – Port Elizabeth
Eswatini 1 (Mkhontfo 89)
Mozambique 1 (Thauzene 39)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tom (RSA)
Eswatini win 4-2 on penalties

Final

Jul 18 – Port Elizabeth
Senegal 0
South Africa 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nkole (Zam)
After Extra-Time. South Africa win 5-4 on penalties

CONCACAF

2021 GOLD CUP

Group A

Jul 10 – Arlington
Mexico 0
Trinidad & Tobago 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Monero (Crc)

Jul 11 – Frisco
El Salvador 2 (Roldan 81, Rivas 90+6)
Guatemala 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)

Jul 14 – Frisco
Trinidad & Tobago 0
El Salvador 2 (Henriquez 30, Martinez 90+1)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Brown (Hon)

Jul 14 – Dallas
Guatemala 0
Mexico 3 (Funes Mori 29, 55, Pineda 79)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Parchment (Jam)

Jul 18 – Dallas
Mexico 1 (L. Rodriguez 26)
El Salvador 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Martinez (Hon)

Jul 18 – Frisco
Guatemala 1 (Gordillo 78)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Moore 12)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Nation (Jam)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico (Q)	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
El Salvador (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Trinidad & Tobago	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Guatemala	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

Group B

Jul 11 – Kansas City
Canada 4 (Larin 16, Osorio 20, Eustaquio 26, Corbeanu 89)
Martinique 1 (Riviere 10)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Barton (Slv)

Jul 11 – Kansas City
United States 1 (Vines 8)
Haiti 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Martinez (Hon)

Jul 15 – Kansas City
Haiti 1 (Lambese 56)
Canada 4 (Eustaquio 5, Larin 51, 74 pen, Hoilett 79 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Calderon (Crc)

Jul 15 – Kansas City
Martinique 1 (Riviere 64 pen)
United States 6 (Dike 14, 59, Camille 23 og, Robinson 50, Zardes 70, Gioacchini 90)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Escobar (Gua)

Jul 18 – Frisco
Martinique 1 (Fortune 53)
Haiti 2 (Antoine 3, Ade 61)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Cornejo (Slv)

Jul 18 – Kansas City
United States 1 (Moore 1)
Canada 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Escobedo (Mex)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States (Q)	3	3	0	0	8	1	9
Canada (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	3	6
Haiti	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
Martinique	3	0	0	3	3	12	0

Group C

Jul 12 – Orlando
Jamaica 2 (Nicholson 6, Decordova-Reid 26)
Suriname 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)

Jul 12 – Orlando
Costa Rica 3 (Campbell 6, Lassiter 21, Borges 70)
Guadeloupe 1 (Mirval 45+5)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)

Jul 16 – Orlando
Guadeloupe 1 (Ramothe 4)
Jamaica 2 (Burke 14, Flemmings 87)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Lopez (Gua)

Jul 16 – Orlando
Suriname 1 (Vlijter 52)
Costa Rica 2 (Campbell 58, Borges 59)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hernandez (Mex)

Jul 20 – Orlando
Costa Rica 1 (Ruiz 53)
Jamaica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Escobar (Gua)

Jul 20 – Houston
Suriname 2 (Vlijter 14, Hasselbaink 79)
Guadeloupe 1 (Phaeton 20)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Costa Rica (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Jamaica (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Suriname	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Guadeloupe	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

Group D

Jul 13 – Houston
Qatar 3 (Afif 48, Ali 53, Al-Haydos 63 pen)
Panama 3 (Blackburn 51, 58, Davis 79 pen)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)

Jul 13 – Houston
Honduras 4 (Bengtson 28, Solano 52, Leveron 86, Quioto 88)
Grenada 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)

Jul 17 – Houston
Grenada 0
Qatar 4 (Hatem 11, Afif 22, Muntari 36, Ali 46)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Villarreal (USA)

Jul 17 – Houston
Panama 2 (Davis 32 pen, Yanis 45+1)
Honduras 3 (Quioto 22, 65, A. Lopez 61)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)

Jul 20 – Houston
Honduras 0
Qatar 2 (Ahmed 25, Hatem 90+5)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)

Jul 20 – Orlando
Panama 3 (Quintero 7, Rodriguez 27, 64)
Grenada 1 (Frank 76)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qatar (Q)	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Honduras (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Panama	3	1	1	1	8	7	4
Grenada	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

Quarter-Finals

Jul 24 – Glendale
Qatar 3 (Ali 2, 55 pen, Hatem 8)
El Salvador 2 (Rivas 63, 66)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Hernandez (Mex)

Jul 24 – Glendale
Mexico 3 (Funes Mori 26, J. Dos Santos 31, Pineda 38)
Honduras 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Escobar (Gua)

Jul 25 – Arlington
Costa Rica 0
Canada 2 (Hoilett 18, Eustaquio 69)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)

Jul 25 – Arlington
United States 1 (Hoppe 83)
Jamaica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)

Semi-Finals

Jul 29 – Austin
Qatar 0
United States 1 (Zardes 86)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Calderon (Crc)

Jul 29 – Houston
Mexico 2 (Pineda 45+2 pen, Herrera 90+9)
Canada 1 (Buchanan 57)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Parchment (Jam)

Final

Aug 1 – Paradise
United States 1 (Robinson 117)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Martinez (Hon)
After Extra-Time

Club Football

AFRICA

FINAL TABLES 2020-21

ANGOLA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sagrada Esperanca (C)	30	21	7	2	42	10	70
Petro de Luanda	30	21	4	5	47	17	67
1º de Agosto	30	19	7	4	54	23	64
Bravos do Maquis	30	15	10	5	43	23	55
Recreativo da Caala	30	11	13	6	30	19	46
Interclube	30	11	11	8	35	22	44
Wiliete	30	10	11	9	38	33	41
Academica do Lobito	30	10	8	12	30	31	38
Progresso	30	9	7	14	29	37	34
Recreativo do Libolo	30	8	10	12	21	32	34
Desportivo Huila	30	9	7	14	25	30	34
Cuando Cubango	30	6	15	9	31	31	33
Sporting de Cabinda	30	10	3	17	25	40	33
Baixa de Kassange (R)	30	8	8	14	28	43	32
Santa Rita (R)	30	7	8	15	18	29	29
Ferroviario do Huambo* (R)	30	0	1	29	5	81	1

**Ferroviario do Huambo forfeited all points (up until the 27th round) for fielding an ineligible player. Subsequently, their respective opponents were each awarded a 3-0 win*

BENIN

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Loto (C)	18	12	3	3	34	15	39
Buffles	18	10	3	5	24	13	33
Dragons	18	8	7	3	21	14	31
Ayema	18	8	7	3	15	9	31
Beke Bembereke	18	7	5	6	21	18	26
Damissa	18	6	6	6	21	19	24
Requins	18	6	5	7	19	21	23
Eternel	18	6	3	9	15	19	21
Cotonou	18	3	10	5	15	22	19
Dynamo Parakou	18	4	6	8	16	21	18
Hodio	18	4	4	10	19	27	16
ASOS	18	1	7	10	12	34	10

BURKINA FASO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SONABEL (C)	34	17	16	1	49	24	67
Douanes	34	17	10	6	56	33	64
Salitas	34	17	9	8	48	33	60
USFA Ouagadougou	34	15	12	7	35	23	57
RC Bobo-Dioulasso	34	10	19	5	36	21	49
ASFA Yennenga	34	11	14	9	32	33	47
Etoile Filante	34	11	10	13	27	27	43
Royal	34	11	10	13	36	37	43
Majestic	34	10	12	12	32	38	42
ASEC Koudougou	34	11	8	15	27	29	41
Rail Club du Kadiogo	34	11	8	15	23	38	41
ASF Bobo-Dioulasso	34	9	13	12	31	40	40
Police	34	8	15	11	30	31	39
Vitesse	34	9	12	13	31	37	39
Rahimo (R)	34	9	10	15	27	35	37
US Ouagadougou (R)	34	7	14	13	26	38	35
Leopards (R)	34	9	8	17	22	40	35
KOZAF (R)	34	6	12	16	27	45	30

BURUNDI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Le Messager Ngozi (C)	30	15	10	5	42	26	55
Kayanza United	30	16	7	7	50	35	55
Flambeau du Centre	30	16	6	8	43	26	54
Aigle Noir	30	15	8	7	49	33	53
Musongati	30	14	8	8	48	30	50
Rukinzo	30	14	8	8	41	35	50
Vital'O	30	13	5	12	34	33	44
Olympic Star	30	12	6	12	35	30	42
Royal de Muramvya	30	11	9	10	36	32	42
Dynamik	30	12	5	13	24	27	41
Bumamuru	30	11	6	13	33	39	39
Athletico Olympic	30	10	7	13	35	42	37
Pujumbura City	30	10	6	14	38	45	36
Inter Star (R)	30	9	4	17	31	42	31
Les Elephants (R)	30	6	7	17	30	58	25
Muzinga (R)	30	2	6	22	15	51	12

CONGO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Otoho d'Oyo (C)	26	21	3	2	48	9	66
Diables Noirs	26	15	6	5	42	21	51
JS Talangai	26	11	7	8	28	26	40
Leopards de Dolisie	26	10	9	7	37	32	39
CARA Brazzaville	26	10	8	8	26	20	38
Etoile du Congo	26	9	10	7	23	22	37
Kondzo	26	8	11	7	25	26	35
Patronage Sainte-Anne	26	8	9	9	17	23	33
Inter Club de Brazzaville	26	6	10	10	23	23	28
Nathalys	26	7	6	13	22	42	27
Nico-Nicoye	26	6	8	12	23	28	26
Vita Club de Mokanda	26	6	7	13	15	30	25
Cheminots (R)	26	6	6	14	25	31	24
RC de Brazzaville (R)	26	6	6	14	28	49	24

DJIBOUTI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arta / Solar 7(C)	18	15	1	2	67	20	46
Police Nationale	18	11	2	5	38	21	35
GR / SIAF	18	9	6	3	43	21	33
Port	18	9	6	3	36	19	33
Gendarmerie	18	8	4	6	34	23	28
ASAS	18	7	4	7	29	22	25
Hayabley	18	5	7	6	21	24	22
Dikhil	18	5	4	9	33	35	19
Barwaqo / CCO (R)	18	2	0	16	11	58	6
Q5 / Nourie Transit (R)	18	1	2	15	16	85	5

DR CONGO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe (C)	30	20	9	1	55	14	69
Maniema Union	30	20	6	4	43	17	66
Vita Club	30	19	8	3	43	21	65
Saint-Eloi Lupopo	30	14	10	6	31	19	52
Sanga Balende	30	15	5	10	30	24	50
Motema Pembe	30	13	7	10	31	24	46
Blessing Kolwezi	30	10	9	11	25	27	39
Don Bosco	30	10	6	14	31	31	36
Renaissance du Congo	30	8	10	12	30	40	34
Rangers	30	10	4	16	25	44	34
JS Kinshasa	30	7	11	12	25	29	32
Dauphins Noirs	30	9	5	16	29	36	32
Simba	30	8	7	15	29	45	31
Groupe Bazano (R)	30	6	11	13	22	28	29
RC Kinshasa (R)	30	5	9	16	25	45	24
Lubumbashi Sport (R)	30	5	5	20	18	48	20

ETHIOPIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fasil Kenema (C)	24	16	6	2	38	17	54
Ethiopia Bunna	24	11	8	5	44	29	41
Kedus Giorgis	24	11	7	6	37	26	40
Hadiya Hosaena	24	10	8	6	26	19	38
Sebeta Kenema	24	9	10	5	28	26	37
Awassa Kenema	24	9	8	7	31	27	35
Bahardar	24	8	9	7	27	23	33
Welayta Dicha	24	9	6	9	31	29	33
Sidama Bunna	24	9	4	11	27	31	31
Dire Dawa Kenema	24	7	7	10	24	31	28
Wolkite Ketema	24	5	7	12	21	29	22
Jimma Aba Jifar	24	2	9	13	19	42	15
Adama Kenema	24	3	5	16	18	42	14

GAMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fortune (C)	26	12	11	3	25	13	47
Elite United	26	10	12	4	33	23	42
Real de Banjul	26	11	9	6	25	19	42
Wallidan	26	10	11	5	36	27	41
Waa Banjul	26	9	11	6	14	11	38
GPA	26	8	12	6	33	24	36
Armed Forces	26	9	7	10	36	40	34
Brikama United	26	8	9	9	30	31	33
Marimoo	26	8	7	11	25	28	31
GAMTEL	26	8	7	11	23	29	31
Banjul	26	5	13	8	16	23	28
Hawks	26	5	11	10	25	29	26
Milan (R)	26	6	8	12	21	32	26
Tallinding United (R)	26	3	12	11	16	29	21

GHANA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hearts of Oak (C)	34	17	10	7	45	23	61
Asante Kotoko	34	15	12	7	37	22	57
WAFA	34	16	8	10	46	38	56
Aduana Stars	34	16	7	11	44	42	55
Medeama	34	15	9	10	38	34	54
Great Olympics	34	15	7	12	37	33	52
Dreams	34	13	10	11	45	35	49
Karela United	34	12	10	12	42	41	46
Ashanti Gold	34	11	12	11	50	36	45
Berekum Chelsea	34	12	7	15	38	46	43
Eleven Wonders	34	11	9	14	33	38	42
Bechem United	34	11	9	14	38	47	42
Legon Cities	34	11	9	14	34	35	42
King Faisal	34	10	11	13	32	45	41
Elmina Sharks	34	10	11	13	34	45	41
Ebusua Dwarfs* (R)	34	12	8	14	40	44	41
Liberty Professionals (R)	34	10	10	14	33	45	40
Inter Allies (R)	34	7	5	22	28	45	26

**Ebusua Dwarfs deducted three points and relegated based on their head-to-head record against Elmina Sharks and King Faisal*

GUINEA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horoya (C)	26	18	4	4	48	13	58
Kamsar	26	12	10	4	33	17	46
Wakriya	26	13	6	7	47	31	45
Ashanti GB	26	12	7	7	24	24	43
Hafia	26	11	9	6	33	21	42
Academie SOAR	26	11	6	9	31	31	39
Kaloum	26	11	5	10	34	28	38
Fello Star	26	10	3	13	28	34	33
Satellite	26	8	7	11	25	33	31
Flamme Olympique	26	7	10	9	24	35	31
Loubha	26	4	11	11	21	28	23
Elephant Coleah	26	5	8	13	25	36	23
Santoba (R)	26	5	8	13	26	45	23
ASFAG (R)	26	6	4	16	27	50	22

GUINEA-BISSAU

Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting da Guinea-Bissau (C)	12	11	0	1	29	4	33
Sporting de Bafata	12	6	2	4	18	17	20
Os Balantas de Mansoa	12	6	2	4	14	12	20
Portos de Bissau	12	5	2	5	11	13	17
Cuntum	12	4	2	6	6	11	14
Sonaco	12	2	5	5	3	7	11
Desportivo de Gabu (R)	12	0	3	9	5	22	3

Serie B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica de Bissau (Q)	12	8	4	0	22	7	28
Canchungo	12	4	4	4	11	13	16
UDIB	12	3	5	4	10	12	14
Pelundo	12	3	4	5	11	13	13
Atletico de Bissora	12	2	7	3	6	10	13
Flamengo de Pefine	12	2	7	3	9	8	13
Nuno Tristao de Bula (R)	12	2	5	5	4	10	11

Finals Series

Final

Jul 10:

Sporting da Guinea-Bissau 1 Benfica de Bissau 0

IVORY COAST

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AFAD (Q)	12	8	2	2	14	7	26
San-Pedro (Q)	12	5	5	2	17	13	20
Bafing	12	3	5	4	8	11	14
Sporting Gagnoa	12	3	4	5	12	13	13
Bassam	12	2	6	4	12	14	12
Indenie Abengourou	12	2	6	4	8	10	12
Africa Sports (R)	12	2	6	4	10	13	11

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SOA (Q)	12	7	3	2	16	7	24
ASEC Mimosas (Q)	12	6	4	2	16	9	22
Racing d'Abidjan	12	4	6	2	13	12	18
Bouake	12	3	5	4	8	8	14
SOL	12	3	4	5	10	11	13
Stella	12	4	1	7	11	20	13
Tanda (R)	12	3	1	8	8	15	10

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Mimosas (C)	6	2	4	0	7	3	10
San-Pedro	6	2	2	2	6	3	8
SOA	6	2	1	3	2	6	7
AFAD	6	1	3	2	3	6	6

LIBERIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LPRC Oilers (C)	22	13	7	2	54	20	46
LISCR	22	13	6	3	44	20	45
Nimba Kwado	22	12	7	3	25	14	43
Watanga	22	11	5	6	41	29	38
BEA Mountain	22	10	6	6	28	19	36
Mighty Barrolle	22	8	7	7	26	25	31
Freeport	22	8	6	8	31	27	30
MC Breweries	22	8	5	9	23	27	29
Nimba United	22	5	10	7	21	23	25
NPA Anchors (R)	22	6	5	11	26	38	23
Nimba (R)	22	1	5	16	15	49	8
Small Town (R)	22	2	1	19	18	61	7

MADAGASCAR

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Adema (C)	6	4	0	2	9	4	12
COSFA	6	3	2	1	10	8	11
Ajesaia	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Five	6	1	0	5	6	12	3

MAURITANIA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nouadhibou (C)	14	11	2	1	24	3	35
Tevragh-Zeine	14	7	1	6	20	13	22
Ksar	14	5	5	4	18	20	20
Nouakchott King's	14	5	3	6	15	15	18
Tidjikja	14	5	3	6	14	19	18
Concorde	14	4	4	6	11	15	16
Kaedi	14	3	5	6	10	17	14
Sahel	14	3	3	8	6	16	12

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SNIM	14	6	6	2	16	7	24
Trarza	14	6	5	3	17	13	23
Police	14	6	3	5	23	14	21
Armee	14	4	8	2	18	15	20
Garde Nationale (R)	14	5	5	4	12	11	20
Kedia (R)	14	4	7	3	15	11	19
JAHE (R)	14	3	3	8	17	32	12
Inter Nouakchott (R)	14	1	5	8	10	25	8

MOROCCO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wydad (C)	30	20	7	3	58	26	67
Raja	30	17	8	5	48	26	59
FAR	30	14	9	7	39	29	51
RS Berkane	30	13	6	11	37	36	45
Mouloudia Oujda	30	12	6	12	38	35	42
Hassania Agadir	30	9	10	11	23	24	37
Maghreb de Fes	30	7	15	8	30	34	36
IR Tanger	30	10	6	14	29	36	36
Chabab Mohammedia	30	7	14	9	26	25	35
FUS Rabat	30	8	11	11	32	36	35
Difaa El Jadidi	30	9	8	13	32	40	35
Olympic Safi	30	8	11	11	30	41	35
Rapide Oued Zem	30	7	12	11	28	36	33
Youssoufia Berrechid	30	7	12	11	23	33	33
Moghreb Tetouan (R)	30	6	14	10	36	43	32
Nahdat Zemamra (R)	30	7	9	14	31	40	30

NIGERIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Akwa United (C)	38	19	14	5	53	24	71
Enyimba	38	18	12	8	41	33	65
Kwara United	38	19	8	11	48	28	64
Nasarawa United	38	20	5	13	55	38	63
Kano Pillars	38	19	7	12	38	29	63
Rivers United	38	18	9	11	48	36	62
Enugu Rangers	38	18	8	12	43	31	59
Lobi Stars	38	17	7	14	43	39	55
Plateau United	38	14	9	15	45	35	51
MFM	38	13	12	13	34	35	50
Dakkada	38	15	5	18	37	47	49
Katsina United	38	14	7	17	35	42	48
Heartland	38	13	9	16	43	50	45
Abia Warriors	38	12	11	15	48	42	44
Wikki Tourists	38	12	9	17	40	47	43
Sunshine Stars	38	11	12	15	28	39	42
Jigawa Golden Stars (R)	38	11	10	17	29	46	42
Warri Wolves (R)	38	11	8	19	30	45	41
Ifeanyi Ubah (R)	38	9	12	17	33	50	36
Adamawa United (R)	38	5	10	23	20	55	25

RWANDA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APR (C)	7	6	1	0	21	1	19
AS Kigali	7	6	1	0	14	2	19
Espoir	7	3	1	3	9	11	10

Police	7	2	2	3	7	11	8
Marines	7	2	1	4	5	12	7
Rutsiro	7	1	3	3	5	12	6
Rayon Sports	7	1	2	4	7	12	5
Bugesera	7	1	1	5	5	12	4

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kiyovu Sports	7	4	1	2	8	3	13
Gasogi United	7	3	3	1	13	7	12
Etincelles	7	4	0	3	13	8	12
Musanze	7	4	0	3	11	14	12
Mukura	7	3	2	2	8	7	11
Gorilla	7	3	1	3	10	9	10
Sunrise (R)	7	2	3	2	13	8	9
Muhanga (R)	7	0	0	7	3	23	0

SENEGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Teungueth (C)	26	15	7	4	36	11	52
Diambars	26	12	10	4	37	18	46
Generation Foot	26	12	10	4	29	12	46
Jaraaf	26	13	5	8	24	22	44
Pikine	26	11	8	7	31	27	41
Casa Sport	26	7	15	4	26	17	36
Mbour Petite Cote	26	9	4	13	21	30	31
Douanes	26	7	9	10	29	36	30
CNEPS Excellence	26	7	8	11	22	32	29
ASEC Ndiambour	26	7	8	11	18	31	29
DSC	26	6	10	10	19	29	28
Goree	26	7	6	13	21	31	27
Stade de Mbour (R)	26	6	8	12	16	26	26
Niarry Tally (R)	26	6	6	14	25	32	2

SOMALIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horseed* (C)	18	11	5	2	37	11	38
Mogadishu City	18	11	5	2	27	12	38
Heegan	18	9	6	3	35	17	33
Raadsan	18	9	6	3	19	10	33
Dekedaha	18	6	5	7	26	17	23
Midnimo	18	7	2	9	18	21	23
Jeenyo	18	5	5	8	19	28	20
Gaadiidka	18	5	4	9	31	31	19
Elman (R)	18	5	2	11	21	25	17
Geeska Afrika (R)	18	1	2	15	8	69	5

**Horseed crowned champions after Mogadishu City failed to attend their Championship decider*

SOUTH AFRICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mamelodi Sundowns (C)	30	19	10	1	49	14	67
AmaZulu	30	15	9	6	38	23	54
Orlando Pirates	30	13	11	6	33	22	50
Golden Arrows	30	11	14	5	40	28	47
SuperSport United	30	11	12	7	37	31	45
Swallows	30	8	20	2	31	23	44
Cape Town City	30	10	11	9	42	40	41
Kaizer Chiefs	30	8	12	10	34	37	36
TS Galaxy	30	9	9	12	26	31	36
Baroka	30	7	13	10	28	36	34
Bloemfontein Celtic	30	6	14	10	30	35	32
Marumo Gallants	30	7	10	13	19	35	31
Maritzburg United	30	7	9	14	27	36	30
Stellenbosch	30	5	14	11	26	32	29
Chippa United	30	5	12	13	24	37	27
Black Leopards (R)	30	5	8	17	23	47	23

TANZANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Simba (C)	34	26	5	3	78	14	83
Young Africans	34	21	11	2	52	21	74
Azam	34	19	11	4	50	22	68
Biashara United	34	13	11	10	28	32	50
KMC	34	13	9	12	39	27	48
Polisi Tanzania	34	10	15	9	29	27	45
Tanzania Prisons	34	10	14	10	25	25	44
Dodoma Jiji	34	11	11	12	28	31	44
Namungo	34	10	13	11	24	31	43
Mbeya City	34	10	12	12	30	33	42
Ruvu Shooting	34	11	8	15	34	38	41
Kagera Sugar	34	10	10	14	34	38	40
Coastal Union	34	10	10	14	29	46	40
Mtibwa Sugar	34	10	9	15	21	31	39
JKT Tanzania (R)	34	11	6	17	34	47	39
Gwambina (R)	34	8	11	15	29	37	35
Ihefu (R)	34	9	8	17	22	41	35
Mwadui (R)	34	5	4	25	24	69	19

TOGO

North

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kara (Q)	14	10	3	1	42	12	33
ASKO de Kara (Q)	14	8	5	1	24	11	29
Unisport	14	5	4	5	20	21	19
Binah	14	4	6	4	9	16	18
Ifodje	14	5	1	8	17	26	16
Semassi	14	4	3	7	18	22	15
Sara Sport	14	4	2	8	16	23	14
Koroki (R)	14	3	2	9	14	29	11

South

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Togo Port* (Q)	14	8	4	2	16	9	28
OTR* (Q)	14	6	5	3	15	10	23
Dynamic Togolais	14	6	4	4	19	14	22
Entente II	14	6	4	4	12	7	22
Gomido	14	5	5	4	15	13	20
Gbohloe-su des Lacs	14	4	4	6	13	12	16
Anges Notse	14	2	5	7	10	21	11
Maranatha Fiokpo (R)	14	2	3	9	9	23	9

**Togo Port and OTR lost in the Finals Series semi-finals against ASKO de Kara and Kara respectively*

Finals Series

Final

Jul 27: Kara 1 ASKO de Kara 1
ASKO de Kara win 4-3 on penalties

TUNISIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance (C)	26	19	3	4	37	16	60
Etoile du Sahel	26	15	5	6	46	26	50
Ben Guerdane	26	10	11	5	25	16	41
Soliman	26	11	7	8	35	34	40
Sfaxien	26	10	10	6	29	16	40
Rejiche	26	9	9	8	27	23	36
Club Africain	26	7	12	7	26	30	33
Tataouine	26	8	9	9	24	30	33
Metlaoui	26	8	8	10	17	21	32
Monastir	26	8	7	11	28	29	31
Bizertin	26	8	7	11	21	27	31
Olympique Beja	26	7	10	9	25	26	31
Stade Tunisien (R)	26	6	11	9	22	22	29
JS Kairouan (R)	26	0	3	23	14	60	3

UGANDA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Express* (C)	26	17	7	2	44	13	58
URA	26	17	6	3	41	18	57
Vipers	26	17	5	4	56	21	56
KCCA	27	14	6	7	56	22	48
Bright Stars	27	11	9	7	40	27	42
Police	27	11	7	9	50	31	40
Mbarara City	27	10	8	9	30	34	38
UPDF	27	11	4	12	34	39	37
Wakiso Giants	26	8	12	6	42	33	36
Villa	27	9	9	9	29	30	36
BUL	27	9	6	12	39	41	33
Onduparaka	26	8	4	14	25	45	28
Busoga United	26	6	8	12	21	44	26
Kyetume (R)	27	5	8	14	28	47	23
MYDA (R)	27	3	5	19	32	77	14
Kitara (R)	27	3	4	20	35	80	13

**Express crowned champions despite league being suspended early due to the COVID-19 pandemic*

ZAMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ZESCO United (C)	34	22	5	7	54	26	71
Zanaco	34	15	10	9	50	36	55
Red Arrows	34	14	9	11	35	28	51
Kabwe Warriors	34	14	9	11	37	34	51
Green Eagles	34	12	14	8	39	30	50
Prison Leopards	34	13	9	12	40	33	48
Lusaka Dynamos	34	12	12	10	35	31	48
Nkwazi	34	12	12	10	30	28	48
Green Buffaloes	34	11	14	9	41	32	47
Power Dynamos	34	12	11	11	29	26	47
Buildcon	34	13	7	14	42	44	46
Forest Rangers	34	11	12	11	36	35	45
Nkana	34	13	6	15	42	46	45
Indeni	34	9	14	11	39	43	41
Young Green Eagles	34	9	13	12	23	38	40
NAPSA Stars (R)	34	9	10	15	34	47	37
Lumwana Radiants (R)	34	7	12	15	23	42	33
Kitwe United (R)	34	3	11	20	15	45	20

ASIA

FINAL TABLES 2020-21

BAHRAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Riffa (C)	18	14	3	1	31	13	45
East Riffa	18	11	2	5	32	20	35
Manama	18	9	4	5	26	18	31
Muharraq	18	7	6	5	24	15	27
Al Hidd	18	8	3	7	26	23	27
Al Ahli	18	5	6	7	17	25	21
Budaiya	18	3	8	7	11	19	17
Al Najma	18	3	6	9	17	31	15
Malkiya (R)	18	2	7	9	11	26	13
Busaiteen (R)	18	1	9	8	17	22	12

HONG KONG

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kitchee	14	10	4	0	29	9	34
Eastern	14	9	4	1	33	12	31
Pegasus	14	8	1	5	20	17	25
Lee Man	14	6	3	5	26	19	21
Southern District	14	3	3	8	24	30	12
Resources Capital	14	4	0	10	11	35	12
Rangers	14	2	5	7	14	23	11
Happy Valley	14	1	6	7	14	26	9

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kitchee (C)	17	11	4	2	32	12	37
Eastern	17	10	4	3	38	16	34
Lee Man	17	9	3	5	34	21	30
Pegasus	17	9	1	7	23	27	28

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Southern District	17	4	4	9	29	35	16
Rangers	17	3	7	7	25	28	16
Resources Capital	17	5	0	12	15	49	15
Happy Valley (R)	17	2	7	8	25	33	13

IRAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Persepolis (C)	30	19	10	1	47	14	67
Sepahan	30	19	8	3	53	24	65
Esteghlal	30	16	8	6	36	19	56
Tractor	30	12	9	9	35	29	45
Gol Gohar	30	13	6	11	33	32	45
Foolad	30	10	14	6	27	18	44
Paykan	30	9	13	8	32	30	40
Mes Rafsanjan	30	10	9	11	23	29	39
Padideh	30	10	8	12	27	31	38
Sanat Naft	30	9	10	11	24	29	37
Aluminium Arak	30	8	13	9	25	33	37
Nassaji Mazandaran	30	9	6	15	27	34	33
Naft Masjed Soleyman	30	7	10	13	21	29	31
Zob Ahan	30	5	11	14	28	39	26
Saipa (R)	30	5	11	14	19	34	26
Machine Sazi (R)	30	2	8	20	19	52	14

IRAQ

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Quwa Al Jawiya (C)	38	25	8	5	68	29	83
Al Zawraa	38	20	15	3	46	19	75
Al Najaf	38	21	11	6	46	26	74
Al Shorta	38	20	12	6	60	27	72
Naft Al Wasat	38	16	15	7	46	31	63
Al Naft	38	12	17	9	36	34	53
Amanat Baghdad	38	13	11	14	30	32	50
Al Minaa	38	12	13	13	45	44	49
Zakho	38	10	16	12	35	40	46
Al Karkh	38	11	12	15	35	40	45
Naft Al Basra	38	10	14	14	35	45	44
Erbil	38	10	14	14	39	41	44
Naft Maysan	38	9	16	13	38	48	43
Al Kahrabaa	38	8	17	13	36	39	41
Al Qasim	38	9	14	15	39	50	41
Al Diwaniya	38	7	20	11	22	36	41
Al Talaba	38	8	15	15	36	47	39
Al Sinaat Al Kahrabaiya (R)	38	7	16	15	27	39	37
Al Hudood (R)	38	4	19	15	32	48	31
Al Samawa (R)	38	5	11	22	22	58	26

KUWAIT

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Arabi (C)	18	13	5	0	39	16	44
Al Qadsia	18	10	6	2	32	16	36
Kuwait SC	18	9	7	2	37	20	34
Kazma	18	6	7	5	30	22	25
Al Nasar	18	6	4	8	20	23	22
Al Salmiyah	18	6	2	10	25	32	20
Al Shabab	18	4	7	7	16	23	19
Al Fahaheel	18	3	7	8	22	36	16
Khaitan (R)	18	3	5	10	21	39	14
Al Sahel (R)	18	3	4	11	21	36	13

LEBANON

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ansar (C)	16	13	1	2	37	8	40
Al Nejmeh	16	10	5	1	31	10	35
Shabab Al Sahel	16	8	3	5	15	11	27
Al Ahed	16	6	6	4	20	16	24
Safa	16	7	3	6	25	25	24
Al Akhaa Ahli Aley	16	5	5	6	8	12	20

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bourj	16	5	8	3	18	13	23
Shabab Bourj	16	6	5	5	22	14	23
Tripoli	16	5	4	7	11	15	19
Tadamon Sour	16	3	7	6	7	12	16
Chabab Ghazieh (R)	16	3	2	11	12	26	11
Salam Zgharta (R)	16	0	1	15	6	50	1

MACAU

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CPK* (C)	17	17	0	0	112	4	51
Benfica	17	14	0	3	90	15	42
Tak Chun Ka I	17	11	2	4	29	27	35
Cheng Fung	17	10	0	7	39	39	30
Lun Lok	17	5	3	9	23	55	18
Policia	17	4	5	8	17	30	17
Sporting Macau	17	5	2	10	30	45	17
Casa de Portugal	17	3	4	10	17	67	13
Monte Carlo (R)	17	2	6	9	14	45	12
Hang Sai (R)	17	2	2	13	12	56	8

**Chao Pak Kei (CPK) crowned champions despite matchday 18 being postponed*

MALDIVES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maziya (C)	14	10	4	0	34	6	34
Valencia	14	7	4	3	21	9	25
Green Streets	14	5	4	5	13	16	19
Eagles	14	4	5	5	15	21	17
Da Grande	14	4	4	6	17	25	16
Super United Sports	14	3	6	5	9	18	15
TC Sports Club	14	3	4	7	11	19	13
United Victory	14	3	3	8	20	26	12

PALESTINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shabab Al Khaleel (C)	22	16	4	2	49	18	52
Markez Balata	22	13	4	5	36	20	43
Hilal Al Quds	22	9	8	5	26	16	35
Jabal Al Mukaber	22	10	5	7	34	29	35
Shabab Al Am'ari	22	10	4	8	43	36	34
Al Birah Institution	22	9	5	8	36	30	32
Shabab Al Dhahiriya	22	7	9	6	32	25	30
Tubas	22	6	8	8	22	35	26
Thaqafi Tulkarem	22	6	6	10	27	31	24
Shabab Alsamu	22	4	10	8	28	38	22
Ahli Al Khalil (R)	22	4	9	9	17	24	21
Taraji Wadi Al Nes (R)	22	1	2	19	16	64	5

QATAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Sadd (C)	22	19	3	0	77	14	60
Al Duhail	22	15	2	5	53	25	47
Al Rayyan	22	10	5	7	31	22	35
Al Gharafa	22	10	3	9	41	34	33
Al Ahli	22	10	3	9	28	38	33
Qatar SC	22	9	5	8	30	24	32
Al Arabi	22	8	5	9	28	32	29
Al Wakrah	22	7	5	10	19	29	26
Al Sailiya	22	7	5	10	22	36	26
Umm Salal	22	5	6	11	13	31	21
Al Khor	22	3	8	11	17	42	17
Al Kharitiyath (R)	22	4	0	18	17	49	12

SAUDI ARABIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal (C)	30	18	7	5	60	27	61
Al Shabab	30	17	6	7	68	43	57
Al Ittihad	30	15	11	4	45	29	56
Al Taawoun	30	13	8	9	42	30	47
Al Ettifaq	30	14	5	11	50	48	47
Al Nassr	30	13	7	10	53	40	46
Al Fateh	30	12	6	12	55	55	42
Al Ahli	30	11	6	13	44	56	39
Al Faisaly	30	9	9	12	42	47	36
Al Raed	30	10	6	14	44	47	36

Damac	30	9	9	12	43	48	36
Al Batin	30	9	9	12	43	55	36
Abha	30	10	6	14	42	50	36
Al Qadsiah (R)	30	8	11	11	41	47	35
Al Wehda (R)	30	9	5	16	40	60	32
Al Ain (R)	30	5	5	20	34	64	20

SYRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tishreen (C)	26	18	5	3	42	16	59
Al Jaish	26	17	6	3	45	19	57
Al Karamah	26	14	10	2	28	14	52
Al Wahda	26	12	11	3	37	18	47
Hutteen	26	13	6	7	33	18	45
Al Taliya	26	8	12	6	31	25	36
Jableh	26	6	11	9	36	41	29
Al Ittihad	26	7	8	11	22	28	29
Al Shorta	26	6	9	11	24	36	27
Al Wathba	26	5	11	10	18	25	26
Al Fotuwa	26	5	9	12	20	29	24
Al Horgelah	26	5	8	13	21	34	23
Al Sahel (R)	26	3	8	15	19	46	17
Al Hurriya (R)	26	3	6	17	16	43	15

THAILAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BG Pathum United (C)	30	24	5	1	54	13	77
Buriram United	30	20	3	7	63	26	63
Port	30	17	5	8	58	36	56
Chiangrai United	30	16	6	8	48	32	54
Bangkok United	30	15	6	9	57	39	51
Samut Prakan City	30	14	5	11	58	51	47
Muang Thong United	30	14	5	11	52	43	47
Ratchaburi	30	13	7	10	48	41	46
Nakhon Ratchasima	30	11	9	10	40	41	42
Prachuap	30	10	7	13	35	47	37
Police Tero	30	10	6	14	32	50	36
Chonburi	30	9	5	16	30	47	32
Suphanburi	30	9	3	18	33	47	30
Sukhothai (R)	30	8	4	18	40	57	28
Trat (R)	30	4	5	21	31	64	17
Rayong (R)	30	4	3	23	24	69	15

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Jazira (C)	26	17	6	3	65	29	57
Baniyas	26	16	6	4	50	22	54
Shabab Al Ahli	26	13	11	2	52	30	50
Sharjah	26	14	6	6	48	29	48
Al Nasr	26	14	4	8	47	33	46
Al Ain	26	11	8	7	39	33	41
Al Wahda	26	10	10	6	48	33	40
Kalba	26	11	6	9	29	39	39
Al Wasl	26	10	7	9	49	47	37
Khor Fakkan	26	7	4	15	35	50	25
Al Dhafra	26	5	6	15	31	58	21
Ajman	26	4	6	16	24	57	18
Fujairah (R)	26	4	3	19	31	57	15
Hatta (R)	26	3	3	20	19	50	12

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2021

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 11 - Monterrey
Monterrey 1 (Meza 9)
Cruz Azul 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Santander (Mex)

Aug 12 – Mexico City
Club America 2 (R. Sanchez 17, Aguilera 80 pen)
Philadelphia Union 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Castellanos (Gua)

FINAL TABLES 2020-21

ARUBA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
RCA (Q)	7	5	2	0	15	3	17
Dakota (Q)	7	3	3	1	15	10	12
La Fama (Q)	7	3	3	1	11	8	12
Nacional (Q)	7	3	2	2	12	6	11
Britannia	7	2	2	3	12	11	8
Estrella	7	2	2	3	12	19	8
Caravel	7	1	1	5	8	17	4
Bubali	7	0	3	4	7	18	3

Finals Series

Semi-Finals

Jul 21: RCA 1 La Fama 2; Dakota 0 Nacional 1

Final

Jul 25: La Fama 0 Nacional 2

CAYMAN ISLANDS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scholars International (C)	18	14	3	1	51	7	45
Bodden Town	18	10	5	3	25	17	35
Future	18	9	5	4	32	26	32
Academy	18	9	3	6	33	23	30
Latinos	18	9	2	7	26	24	29
Elite	18	8	5	5	22	23	29
East End United	18	6	3	9	23	32	21
George Town	18	5	3	10	14	25	18
Sunset	18	3	1	14	18	37	10
Roma United (R)	18	2	0	16	17	47	6

COSTA RICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alajuelense (Q)	22	14	8	0	49	12	50
Santos de Guapiles (Q)	22	10	6	6	36	29	36
Herediano (Q)	22	7	9	6	35	29	30
Deportivo Saprissa (Q)	22	6	11	5	31	29	29
San Carlos	22	7	8	7	21	24	29
Jicaral	22	6	10	6	21	24	28
Perez Zeledon	22	6	10	6	22	29	28
Cartagines	22	6	8	8	23	27	26
Municipal Grecia	22	4	11	7	22	29	23
Sporting San Jose	22	6	5	11	18	31	23
Guadalupe	22	4	10	8	33	31	22
Limon (R)	22	5	6	11	25	42	21

Finals Series

Semi-Finals

May 17: Deportivo Saprissa 4 Alajuelense 3
May 20: Alajuelense 2 Deportivo Saprissa 2
Deportivo Saprissa win 6-5 on aggregate

May 18: Herediano 2 Santos de Guapiles 1
May 20: Santos de Guapiles 0 Herediano 0
Herediano win 3-1 on aggregate

Final

May 24: Deportivo Saprissa 3 Herediano 2
May 27: Herediano 0 Deportivo Saprissa 1
Deportivo Saprissa win 4-2 on aggregate

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cibao* (Q)	18	13	5	0	32	8	44
Atletico Pantoja* (Q)	18	10	4	4	34	17	34
Moca* (Q)	18	9	5	4	26	13	32
Universidad O&M* (Q)	18	9	5	4	26	17	32
Jarabacoa* (Q)	18	6	8	4	20	21	26
Vega Real* (Q)	18	7	3	8	26	26	24
Delfines Del Este	18	5	2	11	20	40	17
San Cristobal	18	4	4	10	15	27	16
Atlantico	18	3	5	10	22	26	14
Atletico de SF (R)	18	3	1	14	15	41	10

**Top six teams qualify for the Championship Round*

EL SALVADOR

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Deportivo (Q)	10	5	3	2	13	10	18
Alianza (Q)	10	5	1	4	19	13	16
FAS (Q)	10	4	4	2	17	15	16
Firpo (Q)	10	3	4	3	14	10	13
Atletico Marte	10	2	4	4	12	19	10
Jocoro	10	1	4	5	5	13	7

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Isidro Metapan (Q)	10	6	1	3	19	10	19
Municipal Limeno (Q)	10	5	3	2	12	7	18
Aguila (Q)	10	3	6	1	10	6	15
Santa Tecla (Q)	10	3	4	3	14	14	13
Chalatenango	10	3	3	4	12	16	12
Sonsonate	10	1	1	8	9	23	4

Finals Series

Quarter-Finals

May 5: Firpo 1 Isidro Metapan 0
May 9: Isidro Metapan 1 Firpo 3
Firpo win 4-1 on aggregate

May 5: Aguila 0 Alianza 1
May 9: Alianza 2 Aguila 1
Alianza win 3-1 on aggregate

May 5: FAS 2 Municipal Limeno 1
May 9: Municipal Limeno 2 FAS 1
3-3 on aggregate. FAS win 4-2 on penalties

May 6: Santa Tecla 2 Once Deportivo 1
May 9: Once Deportivo 1 Santa Tecla 2
Santa Tecla win 4-2 on aggregate

Semi-Finals

May 16: Santa Tecla 0 FAS 1
May 23: FAS 0 Santa Tecla 1
1-1 on aggregate. FAS win 4-2 on penalties

May 16: Firpo 1 Alianza 2
May 23: Alianza 0 Firpo 1
2-2 on aggregate. Alianza win 5-4 on penalties

Final

May 30: Alianza 1 FAS 1
FAS win 3-4 on penalties

GUATEMALA

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Comunicaciones (Q)	16	10	4	2	28	12	34
Santa Lucia (Q)	16	6	6	4	13	13	24
Iztapa (Q)	16	5	7	4	29	25	22
Xelaju	16	3	8	5	14	15	17
Malacateco	16	3	7	6	8	14	16
Antigua GFC	16	2	7	7	15	26	13

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guastatoya (Q)	16	7	7	2	23	10	28
Municipal (Q)	16	8	3	5	24	11	27
Coban Imperial (Q)	16	5	8	3	20	17	23
Deportivo Sanarate (Q)	16	4	6	6	16	25	18
Sacachispas (Q)	16	5	3	8	15	26	18
Achuapa	16	4	2	10	16	27	14

Finals Series

Quarter-Finals

May 5: Deportivo Sanarate 2 Guastatoya 0
May 8: Guastatoya 4 Deportivo Sanarate 1
Guastatoya win 4-3 on aggregate

May 6: Iztapa 3 Municipal 1
May 9: Municipal 0 Iztapa 0
Iztapa win 3-1 on aggregate

May 6: Sacachispas 0 Comunicaciones 1
May 9: Comunicaciones 1 Sacachispas 0
Comunicaciones win 2-0 on aggregate

May 6: Coban Imperial 1 Santa Lucia 1
May 9: Santa Lucia 3 Coban Imperial 0
Santa Lucia win 4-1 on aggregate

Semi-Finals

May 12: Iztapa 2 Comunicaciones 2
May 12: Comunicaciones 2 Iztapa 1
Comunicaciones win 4-3 on aggregate

May 14: Santa Lucia 1 Guastatoya 0
May 16: Guastatoya 1 Santa Lucia 2
Santa Lucia win 3-1 on aggregate

Final

May 20: Santa Lucia 4 Comunicaciones 0
May 24: Comunicaciones 5 Santa Lucia 2
Santa Lucia win 6-5 on aggregate

HONDURAS

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Espana (Q)	14	4	7	3	17	13	19
Honduras Progreso (Q)	14	3	6	5	20	25	15
Vida (Q)	14	2	8	4	19	23	14
Marathon	14	3	5	6	17	22	14
Platense	14	2	6	6	20	33	12

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpia (Q)	14	11	2	1	36	9	35
Motagua (Q)	14	9	4	1	29	14	31
UPNFM (Q)	14	5	4	5	20	19	19
Real Sociedad	14	3	8	3	21	21	17
Real de Minas	14	0	6	8	11	31	6

Finals Series

Elimination Finals

May 2: UPNFM 3 Honduras Progreso 2
May 6: Honduras Progreso 4 UPNFM 0
Honduras Progreso win 5-3 on aggregate

May 2: Vida 1 Motagua 1
May 6: Motagua 3 Vida 0
Motagua win 4-1 on aggregate

Semi-Finals

May 9: Honduras Progreso 0 Olimpia 0
May 13: Olimpia 7 Honduras Progreso 0
Olimpia win 7-0 on aggregate

May 9: Motagua 1 Real Espana 0
May 13: Real Espana 1 Motagua 0
1-1 on aggregate. Motagua win 6-7 on penalties

Final

May 17: Motagua 2 Olimpia 1
May 20: Olimpia 1 Motagua 0
1-1 on aggregate. Olimpia win 4-3 on penalties

NICARAGUA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Diriangen (Q)	18	13	1	4	36	16	40
Real Esteli (Q)	18	12	2	4	34	13	38
Managua (Q)	18	10	3	5	41	23	33
Walter Ferretti (Q)	18	10	3	5	29	17	33
Deportivo Ocotal (Q)	18	7	5	6	22	21	26
Real Madriz (Q)	18	6	3	9	18	26	21
Municipal Jalapa	18	4	5	9	21	32	17
Junior	18	4	4	10	16	33	16
Juventus Managua	18	4	3	11	17	33	15
Chinandega	18	3	5	10	17	37	14

Finals Series

Elimination Finals

May 10: Walter Ferretti 3 Deportivo Ocotal 0;
Managua 1 Real Madriz 0

Semi-Finals

May 13: Walter Ferretti 1 Diriangen 0
May 16: Diriangen 3 Walter Ferretti 0
Diriangen win 3-1 on aggregate

May 14: Managua 3 Real Esteli 1
May 17: Real Esteli 4 Managua 2
5-5 on aggregate. Managua win on away goals

Final

May 23: Managua 0 Diriangen 2
May 30: Diriangen 1 Managua 1
Diriangen win 2-1 on aggregate

PANAMA

East

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plaza Amador (Q)	16	7	6	3	22	14	27
Costa del Este (Q)	16	5	6	5	15	14	21
Sporting San Miguelito (Q)	16	5	6	5	16	19	21
Tauro	16	4	6	6	12	16	18
Arabe Unido	16	3	7	6	15	18	16
Alianza	16	2	8	6	13	17	14

West

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario (Q)	16	8	6	2	25	15	30
Independiente (Q)	16	8	3	5	19	15	27
Veraguas (Q)	16	6	8	2	20	19	26
Herrera	16	7	4	5	20	16	25
Atletico Chiriqui	16	5	3	8	21	26	18
San Francisco	16	2	5	9	14	23	11

Finals Series

Elimination Finals

May 12: Costa del Este 1 Veraguas 1
Veraguas win on penalties

May 13: Independiente 0 Sporting San Miguelito 0
Sporting San Miguelito win on penalties

Semi-Finals

May 15: Veraguas 0 Universitario 0
May 23: Universitario 2 Veraguas 0
Universitario win 2-0 on aggregate

May 16: Sporting San Miguelito 0 Plaza Amador 1
May 24: Plaza Amador 1 Sporting San Miguelito 1
Plaza Amador win 2-1 on aggregate

Final

May 29: Universitario 1 Plaza Amador 2

SOUTH AMERICA

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Round of 16 – 2nd Leg

Jul 20 - Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro 0 (0)
Boca Juniors 0 (0)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ostojich (Uru)
Atletico Mineiro won 3-1 on penalties

Jul 20 – Avellaneda
Racing 1 (2) (Correa 63)
Sao Paulo 3 (4) (Rigoni 44, 57, Marquinhos 48)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tejera (Uru)

Jul 21 - Brasilia
Flamengo 4 (5) (Rodrigo Caio 9, De Arrascaeta 66, Vitinho 83, 90+4)
Defensa y Justicia 1 (1) (Loaiza 41)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tobar (Chi)

Jul 21 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 1 (2) (Rocha 36)
Universidad Catolica 0 (0)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Herrera (Ven)

Jul 21 – Guayaquil
Barcelona 3 (3) (Preciado 24, Cortez 69 pen, Perlaza 80)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (2) (Lucero 48)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Maza (Chi)

Jul 21 – Buenos Aires
Argentinos Juniors 0 (1)
River Plate 2 (3) (Romero 35, 54)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Arleu (Bra)

Jul 22 – Porto Alegre
Internacional 0 (0)
Olimpia 0 (0)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ferreyra (Uru)
Olimpia win 5-4 on penalties

Aug 3 – Rio deJaneiro
Fluminense 1 (3) (Fred 24 pen)
Cerro Porteno 0 (0)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 10 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 1 (Luan 54)
Palmeiras 1 (Patrick 74)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)

Aug 11 – Asuncion
Olimpia 1 (Torres 45+14)
Flamengo 4 (De Arrascaeta 16, Gabriel Barbosa 45+12, 52, Vitnho 90+1)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Rapallini (Arg)

Aug 11 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 0
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Fernandez 58)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Valenzuela (Ven)

Aug 12 – Rio deJaneiro
Fluminense 2 (Teixeira 26, Fred 90+5 pen)
Barcelona 2 (Preciado 69, Cortez 88 pen)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Herrera (Ven)

2021 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Round of 16 – 2nd Leg

Jul 20 – Curitiba
Athletico Paranaense 4 (5) (Vitinho 26, 71, Nikao 79 pen, Canesin 90+7)
America de Cali 1 (1) (Ramos 70 pen)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Herrera (Arg)

Jul 20 – Porto Alegre
Gremio 1 (2) (Diego Souza 23)
LDU Quito 2 (2) (Alcivar 44, 56 pen)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Argote (Ven)
LDU Quito win on away goals

Jul 21 – Asuncion
Libertad 0 (4)
Junior 1 (4) (Gonzalez 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Matonte (Uru)
Libertad win on away goals

Jul 21 – Asuncion
Arsenal 1 (2) (Albertengo 52)
Sporting Cristal 1 (3) (Gonzales 85)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Claus (Bra)

Jul 22 – Braganca Paulista
Red Bull Bragantino 1 (3) (Cuello 52)
Independiente del Valle 1 (1) (Guerrero 4)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tobar (Chi)

Jul 22 – Rosario
Rosario Central 1 (3) (Vecchio 42)
Deportivo Tachira 0 (2)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Jul 22 - Montevideo
Penarol 0 (2)
Nacional 1 (2) (Corujo 90+11)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Daronco (Bra)
Penarol win on away goals

Jul 22 - Avellaneda
Independiente 1 (1) (Gonzalez 68)
Santos 1 (2) (Kaio Jorge 38)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 10 – Rosario
Rosario Central 3 (Ruben 23, 55, Caraglio 62)
Red Bull Bragantino 4 (Bruno Praxedes 16, Artur 20 pen, 43, 73)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Haro (Per)

Aug 11 – Lima
Sporting Cristal 1 (Merlo 90)
Penarol 3 (Alvrez Martinez 8, Torres 19, Gargano 90+5)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)

Aug 12 – Santos
Santos 2 (Sanchez 43 pen, Barboza 90+3 og)
Libertad 1 (Bocanegra 59)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Uru)

Aug 12 – Quito
LDU Quito 1 (Reasco 87)
Athletico Paranaense 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Matonte (Uru)

COLOMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Nacional (Q)	18	10	4	4	37	15	34
Independiente Santa Fe (Q)	18	9	6	3	25	14	33
Millonarios (Q)	18	10	3	5	25	18	33
Deportivo Cali (Q)	18	8	7	3	19	14	31
Deportes Tolima (Q)	18	8	6	4	22	14	30
La Equidad (Q)	18	8	6	4	21	18	30
Junior (Q)	18	8	5	5	21	13	29
America de Cali (Q)	18	7	8	3	19	12	29
Independiente Medellin	18	6	8	4	17	15	26
Jaguares	18	7	4	7	21	21	25
Atletico Bucaramanga	18	6	6	6	20	16	24
Deportivo Pasto	18	4	11	3	19	20	23
Boyaca Chico	18	5	4	9	17	20	19
Deportivo Pereira	18	4	6	8	16	24	18
Once Caldas	18	3	8	7	20	23	17
Envigado	18	3	8	7	15	23	17
Patriotas Boyaca	18	5	2	11	17	31	17
Aguilas Doradas	18	2	8	8	13	24	14
Alianza Petrolera	18	0	6	12	10	39	6

Finals Series

Quarter-Finals

Apr 24: America de Cali 1 Millonarios 2
May 2: Millonarios 0 America de Cali 0
Millonarios win 2-1 on aggregate

Apr 25: Junior 3 Independiente Santa Fe 1
May 2: Independiente Santa Fe 0 Junior 0
Junior win 3-1 on aggregate

Apr 25: Deportes Tolima 3 Deportivo Cali 0
May 4: Deportivo Cali 2 Deportes Tolima 0
Deportes Tolima win 3-2 on aggregate

Apr 26: La Equidad 1 Atletico Nacional 0
May 2: Atletico Nacional 2 La Equidad 2
La Equidad win 3-2 on aggregate

Semi-Finals

Jun 10: Junior 3 Millonarios 2
June 13: Millonarios 2 Junior 0
Millonarios win 4-3 on aggregate

Jun 11: Deportes Tolima 1 La Equidad 1
June 15: La Equidad 1 Deportes Tolima 2
Deportes Tolima win 3-2 on aggregate

Final

Jun 18: Deportes Tolima 1 Millonarios 1
June 20: Millonarios 1 Deportes Tolima 2
Deportes Tolima win 3-2 on aggregate

URUGUAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (C)	15	10	4	1	34	13	34
Penarol	15	8	5	2	20	12	29
Montevideo City Torque	15	7	5	3	30	14	26
Nacional	15	7	5	3	19	16	26
Plaza Colonia	15	7	4	4	28	16	25
Boston River	15	7	1	7	23	26	22
Fenix*	15	5	7	3	25	24	21
River Plate*	15	5	4	6	19	23	21
Deportivo Maldonado	15	4	6	5	21	27	18
Montevideo Wanderers**	15	3	6	6	22	31	18
Cerro Largo	15	4	4	7	15	17	16
Progreso**	15	5	3	7	17	22	15
Danubio	15	4	3	8	17	23	15
Cerro	15	3	5	7	16	21	14
Defensor Sporting	15	2	8	5	15	21	14
Rentistas	15	2	4	9	12	27	10

**River Plate awarded two points and Fenix deducted one point after Fenix fielded an ineligible player during a match between the two teams*
***Montevideo Wanderers awarded three points and Progreso deducted three points after Progreso fielded an ineligible player during a match between the two teams*

Championship Play-Offs

Liverpool qualify as Clausura winners
Rentistas qualify as Apertura winners
Nacional qualify after topping aggregate table

Semi-Final

Apr 1: Rentistas 1 Liverpool 1
Rentistas won 3-2 on penalties

Final

Apr 5: Nacional 3 Rentistas 0
Apr 7: Rentistas 0 Nacional 1
Nacional win 4-0 on aggregate

OCEANIA

NEW ZEALAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland City (P)*	14	8	4	2	27	13	28
Team Wellington (C)**	14	7	5	2	35	21	26
Hamilton Wanderers	14	5	5	4	23	21	20
Eastern Suburbs	14	5	4	5	25	23	19
Waitakere United	14	4	6	4	28	26	18
Canterbury United	14	5	3	6	21	24	18
Hawke's Bay United	14	4	1	9	17	29	13
Wellington Phoenix II	14	2	4	8	18	37	10

**Auckland City crowned Premiers*
***Team Wellington crowned Champions after beating Auckland City 4-2 in Finals Series Grand Final*

TAHITI

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pirae	12	10	1	1	68	14	43
Venus	12	10	1	1	58	14	43
Dragon	12	9	2	1	55	15	41
Pueu	12	8	2	2	42	20	38
Central	12	6	2	4	20	23	32
Tiare Tahiti	12	5	3	4	36	24	30
Tefana	12	5	3	4	27	21	29
Jeunes Tahitiens	12	5	1	6	21	32	28
Manu Ura	12	5	0	7	22	39	27
Olympic Mahina	12	2	2	8	18	49	20
Mataiea	12	2	0	10	20	61	18
Arue	12	1	1	10	10	42	16
Excelsior	12	1	0	11	17	60	15

Note: 4 points for a win, 2 points for a draw and 1 point for a defeat in Tahiti league

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pirae* (C)	6	4	2	0	24	9	22
Venus	6	5	1	0	14	1	22
Dragon	6	3	0	3	19	16	15
Tefana	6	3	0	3	20	12	15
Pueu	6	2	2	2	17	25	14
Tiare Tahiti	6	0	2	4	10	28	8
Central	6	0	1	5	7	20	7

**Pirae awarded two bonus points for topping the Regular Season table on goal difference*

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympic Mahina	10	8	2	0	23	10	36
Mataiea	10	6	1	3	25	19	29
Excelsior	10	6	0	4	21	17	28
Manu Ura (R)	10	4	1	5	20	25	23
Arue (R)	10	1	2	7	7	17	15
Jeunes Tahitiens (R)	10	1	2	7	15	23	15

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GROUP EDITOR
Stephen Fishlock

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Jamie Evans & Jared Tinslay

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Sean Phillips, atg-media.com

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Talk Media Sales: David Lerpiniere
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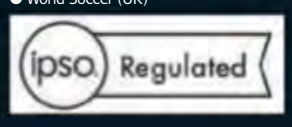


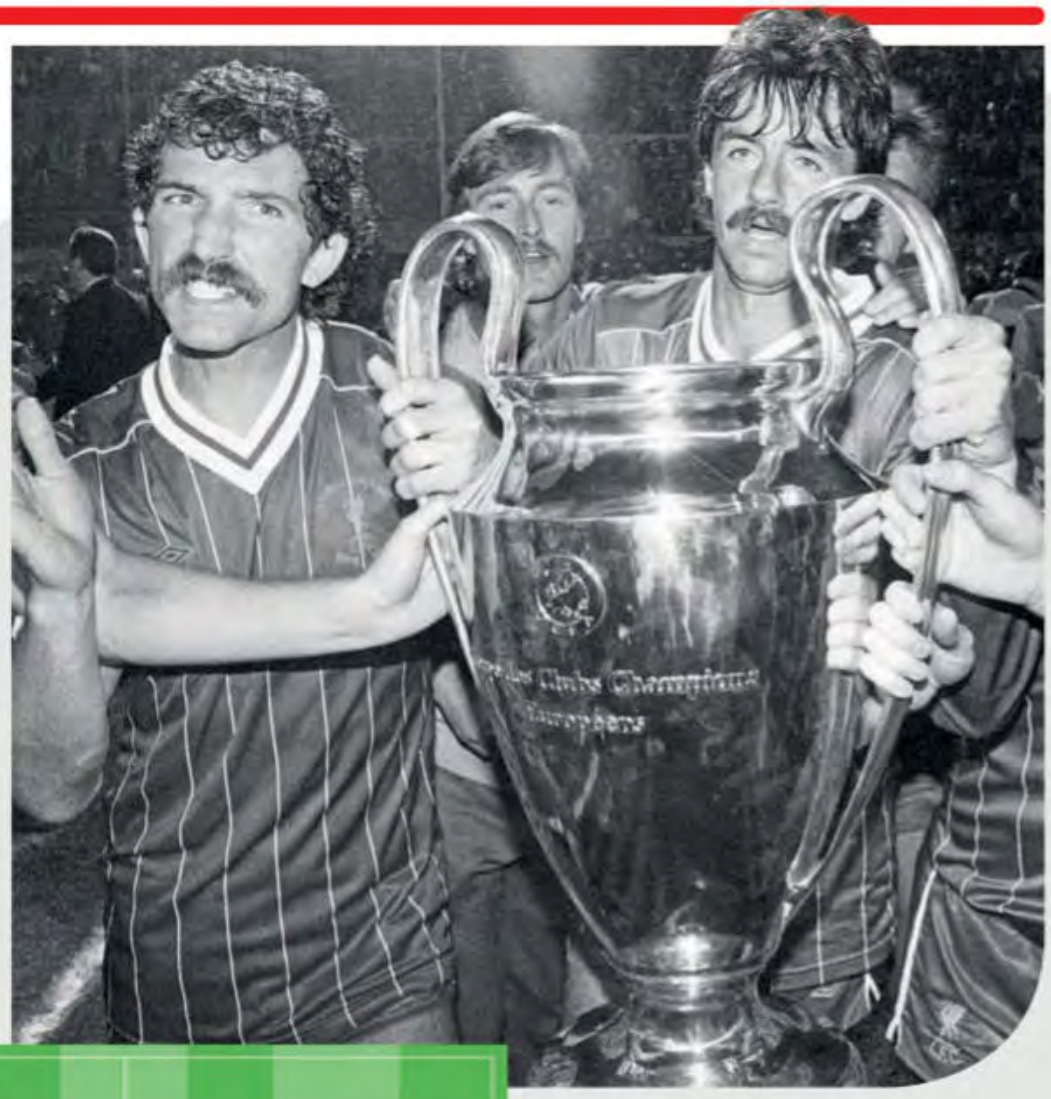
Mark Lawrenson

Liverpool 1 Roma 1

(Liverpool won 4-2 on penalties)

1984 European Cup Final, Rome

Liverpool were a team of serial European Cup winners when Mark Lawrenson arrived in 1981. Three years later, he had a medal of his own, after the Reds became the first team to win the final by penalty shootout, in a night that has gone down in Anfield folklore...



European champs... Lawrenson (right) holds the trophy with Graeme Souness (left)

"I didn't really think about winning the European Cup when I was growing up. It felt like a dream too far.

You set out with a dream of playing for your local club, maybe get to Wembley at some point, but the European Cup is a match you see on TV, not something you believe you will be a part of one day.

Yet that was me in 1984, winning the biggest competition of them all against Roma in front of their own fans in Rome.

When I look back on our run in that season, the semi-final against Dinamo Bucharest was perfect preparation for what was to come in the final: the atmosphere out in Romania was hostile with a capital H.

It was scary. We won the first leg at Anfield 1-0 and, for them, the second leg was the biggest game of their lives.

They tried every trick in the book to intimidate us and I remember they went after Graeme Souness in a big way – fair enough, after he had broken their best player's [Lica Movila] jaw in the first leg.

He would never have got away with it now, but Graeme delivered a punch that flattened the guy at Anfield and no one saw it. Not the referee, none of the players and the TV cameras didn't spot it either. The perfect crime!

From the moment we arrived at the airport, you got the impression that something bad might happen, so we were just happy to get out of there with a 2-1 win and a place in the final.

After coming through that, Roma in Rome didn't seem so bad. The fact that I was in a dressing room full of champions that had already won the European Cup a couple of times made my first experience of a final seem a lot easier.

I remember being in the tunnel before we went out into this lion's den and we were all just so calm, ready to go. This was a team of winners and nothing affected us. One of the lads started singing the Chris Rea song, *I Don't Know What It Is But I Love It*, and I can only imagine what the Roma players thought. That song had become a kind of anthem for us that season and it probably gave them a hint that we weren't worried about what was to come.

We were the better side against Roma, but we couldn't get the winning goal we deserved and it came down to penalties. Bruce Grobbelaar did his famous spaghetti legs and that seemed to do the trick.

Penalties should have been a concern for us because the day before we flew down to Rome, we had a shootout practice against the youth team and it was a mess. Bruce didn't get near any of them and we ended up losing against the kids, but we won it when it mattered most.

That Liverpool team was special. Three European Cups? I was only part of one of them so I can't take too much credit for that record, but they were a special team. We had players that were good enough to play in any era: Graeme Souness, Alan Hansen, Kenny Dalglish and Ian Rush were world-class performers and they would have been stars now, no doubt about it. Imagine how much they would be worth in the current transfer market? You couldn't put a price on them."

> He would never have got away with it now, but Graeme delivered a punch that flattened the guy at Anfield and no one saw it

Spaghetti legs... Roma's Francesco Graziani skies his penalty over Bruce Grobbelaar's crossbar

Mark Lawrenson was speaking to Kevin Palmer for World Soccer at a BT Sport event

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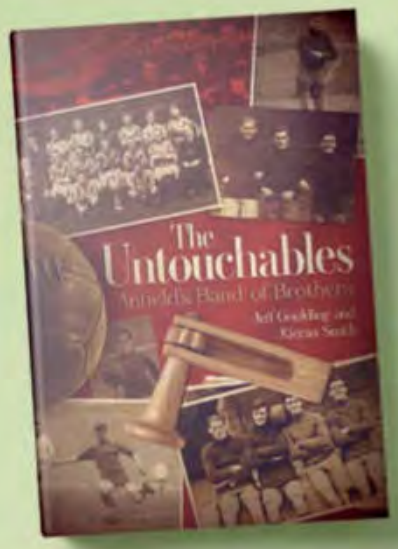

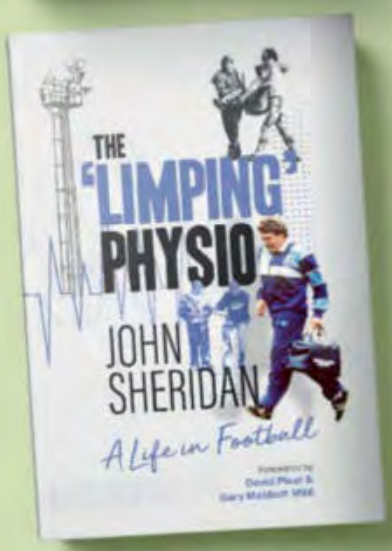

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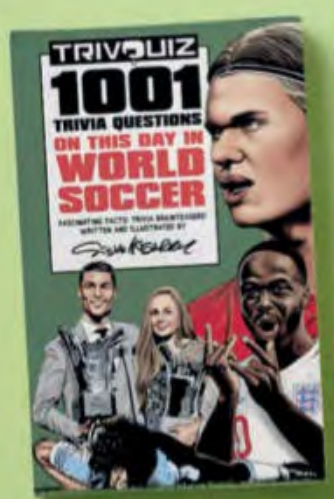

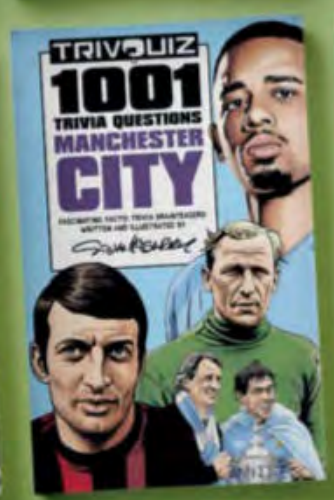

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